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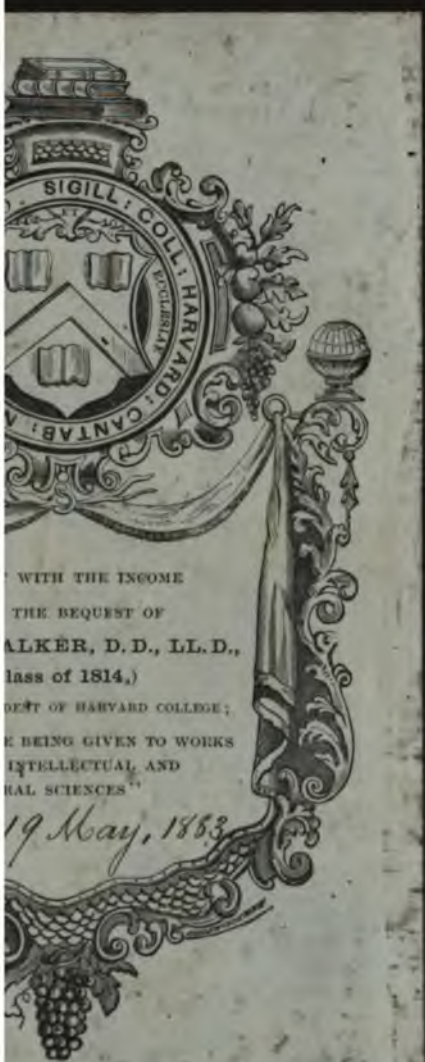
CHURCH SYSTEMS
IN THE
XIXTH CENTURY

J. G. ROGERS, B. A.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19 May, 1863

THE
CHURCH SYSTEMS OF ENGLAND
IN THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY.

THE

CHURCH SYSTEMS OF ENGLAND

IN THE

NINETEENTH CENTURY.

THE

SIXTH CONGREGATIONAL UNION LECTURE.

BY

J. GUINNESS ROGERS, B.A.

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To the

REV. HENRY ALLON, D.D.,

CHAIRMAN OF

The Congregational Union of England and Wales

IN ITS JUBILEE YEAR, 1881,

WHO,

NOT MORE BY HIS HIGH CHARACTER, VARIED TALENTS,

AND UNTIRING LABOURS,

THAN BY HIS REMARKABLE UNION OF BROAD CATHOLIC SYMPATHIES

WITH STRONG DENOMINATIONAL ATTACHMENTS,

HAS RENDERED

SUCH EMINENT SERVICES TO ENGLISH CONGREGATIONALISM,

This Volume is inscribed,

IN HEARTY APPRECIATION OF THE PRINCIPLES AND WORK

OF HIS PUBLIC LIFE,

AND IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PLEASURE DERIVED FROM

AN UNBROKEN FRIENDSHIP OF

MORE THAN A QUARTER OF A CENTURY,

BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT

BY THE COMMITTEE OF THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION OF ENGLAND AND WALES.

THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION LECTURE has been established with a view to the promotion of Biblical Science, and Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature.

It is intended that each Lecture shall consist of a course of Prelections, delivered at the Memorial Hall, but when the convenience of the Lecturer shall so require, the oral delivery will be dispensed with.

The Committee hope that the Lecture will be maintained in an unbroken Annual Series; but they promise to continue it only so long as it seems to be efficiently serving the end for which it has been established, or as they may have the necessary funds at their disposal.

For the opinions advanced in any of the Lectures, the Lecturer alone will be responsible.

CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL,
FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON.

PREFACE.

NO one can be more conscious of the defects of this volume than I am myself. It was not till I had accepted the invitation of the Committee of the Congregational Union and consented to deliver a course of Lectures on the Church history of the period, and was actually engaged in preparation for the work, that I fully realized the difficulty of the task I had undertaken. The subject was one which had engaged a great deal of my thought and time, and in agreeing to deal with it, my only idea was to present a general survey of the position of the various Churches which are influencing the religious thought of our country and our generation. But it soon became evident that I could not do this without attempting a fuller examination of the leading ecclesiastical controversies of the time than I had originally intended. I have, of course, treated them from the standpoint of a Congregationalist and one who is committed to the struggle for complete religious equality, but I have anxiously sought to do justice not only to

the motives, but also to the principles of those to whom I am conscientiously opposed. I do not delude myself with the idea that in this I have succeeded to the extent of my own desire, but I hope that even those who are most ready to point out my failure will, at least, give me credit for honesty of purpose. I can, at all events, say that no differences of opinion would ever be allowed by me consciously to influence my judgments of character or to affect my relations to good men who are serving the great Master to whom I seek to dedicate my own life. If my personal respect for them does not prevent me from opposing their views, it is because I believe that such discussions are essential to the full development of truth, and that Christian character may even gain by them, provided they be conducted with fairness and courtesy, in the growth of a wiser tolerance and a broader sympathy.

A lecture on "Ultramontanism" formed part of my original plan. It has been omitted not from any doubt as to the importance of the subject, but from the impossibility of treating it with any adequacy within the necessary limits of this volume. If God be pleased to give me health and strength, I indulge the hope of some day finding leisure for the separate discussion of a system which wears so alarming an aspect to numbers, and which, at all events, has made such aggressions of late years as to render it incumbent on all Protestants to try and understand the nature of its power and resources, so as to be prepared to offer it an intelligent as well as strenuous resistance. In the meantime, let

me say, it is so distinctly a foreign system that I do not feel that its omission interferes with the completeness of the present survey.

I am indebted to my valued friend Mr. R. W. Dale for kindly revising the proofs. The pains which he has bestowed upon a wearisome task, and the valuable suggestions which he has thrown out in the course of the revision, deserve my heartiest acknowledgment; but this service constitutes a small fraction of the debt I owe to a friendship which is not only one of the truest joys, but also one of the most healthful and stimulating influences of my life.

I have only further to express my obligations to the Committee of the Congregational Union for the honour they did me in inviting me to undertake this work, and for the patience with which they waited for the long delayed fulfilment of my promise. It has been extremely difficult to snatch from the incessant calls of pastoral and public service the time necessary for the preparation of these lectures, and I feel how much I owe to the considerate thoughtfulness of a loyal and attached congregation, who under the pressure of this work have shown me a sympathy and indulgence which I am bound thus gratefully to recognize.

The service here completed has been done for the honour of the great Head of the Church. The one question as to every system is how far it is in harmony with His will, and is calculated to promote His glory. In every Church, as in every age and every land, are those who love Him, and there is, perhaps, not one of

our systems which has not its own distinctive feature of excellence, and has not made its own special contribution to the "edifying of the body of Christ." I trust that I have never been forgetful of this in any criticisms I have passed upon what to me appear to be errors, but rather have rejoiced to acknowledge that "amid the differences of administrations there is the same Lord," and "amid all diversities of operation it is the same God which worketh all in all."

J. GUINNESS ROGERS.

CLAPHAM COMMON,
May, 1881.

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LECTURE I.

THE AGE AND THE CHURCHES.

LECTURE I.

THE AGE AND THE CHURCHES.

THE last half-century has witnessed a change, alike in the internal condition of the several communities which together constitute Anglican Christendom, and in their relations to each other, that is little short of a revolution. It is not that there have been conversions on such a scale as to necessitate a revision of the ecclesiastical map, that any one of the great historic systems has passed through any great internal modifications, or has made important aggression at the cost of its neighbours. Here and there, indeed, may be found alterations in ecclesiastical arrangement, but they are of little significance as compared with those silent and unobserved changes, in spirit rather than in method, which leave the whole framework of institutions untouched, which are not registered in formal decrees, and which it would be difficult to express by any symbols, but which, nevertheless, have wrought a more thorough transformation than any legislation could have accomplished. So gradual has been the process by which a revolution has been effected, the reality of which we are only now beginning to perceive, and which even to-day many would be unprepared to admit, that we who live in the midst of it, and have ourselves been drifted onward by its currents, have been but dimly, if at all, conscious of its gravity

and extent, and are only able now to appreciate it fully by comparing the state of things around us with that which existed even within our own recollection.

A superficial observer, looking at the England of to-day, might indeed be disposed to say that all things continue as they were, from the beginning at least of the days of toleration. Churchman and Dissenter, Protestant and Roman Catholic, orthodox and heterodox, fill their old places, flourish their old flags, engage in their old wrangles, and so the dreary round goes on from age to age, each successive generation refusing to learn from the experience of its fathers, and plodding its weary way through the same follies and errors to precisely the same results. It would be a melancholy fact if true; but it is at best not more than a half-truth. Men do learn, though they may not be always ready to admit how far they have been compelled to renounce old ideas and admit new ones. Churches, even the most stolid and impenetrable, are not so wholly inaccessible to the influences which are at work around them as might appear from the servile devotion to the past, and the obstinate adherence to their precedents, traditions, and formularies which seem by many to be regarded as an essential element of religion. Church and world, though antagonistic, perhaps because antagonistic, act and react upon each other; and it is simply impossible that our various systems should have been exposed to the incessant play of all the influences tending to break down the barriers of conventional opinion, emancipate intellect from the bondage of tradition and authority, and stimulate progress, which are at work in this age, without showing the effect. It is not easy to describe the course of the change, or to trace the

connection between each separate cause and its result, any more than to write the history of the pebble on the beach, or to show what each individual tide has done towards shaping it into the form which the action of the waves has given to it. But the result is as impossible to deny in the one case as in the other.

It is not only in our own country that these influences have been at work, or that they have affected the position of the Churches. But among us they have been more felt, partly because of the freer play of modern ideas in our midst, but yet more because with us Christianity is still a living force, and Church life a reality. To a large number of continental thinkers we are still but the miserable victims of superstition, and, as we have recently been given to understand by a distinguished German critic in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*, his countrymen find some compensation for their own admitted inferiority in point of political freedom in the more perfect liberty they have attained in theological thought. It evidently did not occur to Dr. Hillebrand that there may be a relation between these two things very different from that which he has perceived, and that the robustness of principle and the independence of character, which have mainly contributed to make our political institutions what they are, may be traced to the sincerity and depth of our religious convictions. Certain it is that throughout our political contests the most strenuous supporters of liberty have learned from the gospel that respect for the individual man which lies at the root of all true conceptions of political right, and have caught their inspiration from Him who has taught, by precept and example, that our work in the world is to be a constant witnessing for the truth. Our noblest struggle

for freedom was mainly inspired by Christian principle, and its character and results were largely due to that sturdy Puritan spirit which knew not the fear of man, because it was possessed by the fear of God.

Happily for the nation we have not sunk into a condition of supreme indifference to Christ and His message. There are those who loudly proclaim the decadence of the gospel and its approaching collapse, boasting that the intellect of the age has all gone away from it, and that the time cannot be distant when it will be consigned to the tomb of obsolete superstitions. But though they seem to think they show the gospel wondrous consideration when they admit that there are in it some precious truths which will survive the wreck of the *Aberglaube* by which they have been overlaid, the passion with which they attack the religion of Christ is a tacit recognition of the hold it still has on the minds of the people. The fierceness of our controversies about things which are but childish trifles in the eyes of those to whom Christianity itself is but a strange illusion which they are unable to explain, is another fact pointing in the same direction. To the unbeliever all forms of religious worship are equally solemn and equally meaningless. To him it must be a matter of supreme indifference whether a Christian minister be a teacher or a priest, since he repudiates alike the claims of both. If his scepticism were dominant the conflicts about priests and robes would be treated by the people with scornful indifference. They would be partly amused, partly indignant, wholly contemptuous of the conflicts about altars and robes. Before a nation can be stirred to any strong feeling on such questions there must be in it so much of reverence for Christi-

anity that it is a matter of practical importance what character its ministers are entitled to assume. England is agitated not only about the priesthood, but about its dress, the ceremonial which it is to adopt, the authority it is to enjoy. There could be no earnestness about such questions were the religion itself so discredited that they were all matters of absolute insignificance, except to the ministers themselves and a small circle of their admirers.

Despite much that justifies anxiety, and sometimes creates depression, there is reason for thankfulness that the religion of Jesus Christ has still such a hold on the nation that alike in commercial, political, literary, and social circles there are men who are imbued with its spirit, and governed by its laws. The Christian Church is not a caste apart, a little sect belonging to the past rather than the present, and jealously clinging to a worn-out faith which the great body of the people have contemptuously cast aside. The leaders of Agnosticism cannot deceive themselves into the belief that the enthusiastic followers who applaud all their utterances, and ascribe to them something little short of infallibility, represent the dominant thought of the time, so long as they find Christianity everywhere, and ardent and enthusiastic believers prominent in all the great works of the world. While the gospel teaches men not to withdraw from the world, but to manifest the beauty of godliness in it, the Churches whose members are brought into contact with the various forms of modern thought must, more or less, be moved by them. Were there less reality in the religion the effect would not be so great. If a point has been reached at which religion is regarded as a respectable propriety which it is not desirable to disturb, but to which sane men attach no value, every-

thing pertaining to it would be left untouched. But where the religion is the life, everything that helps to foster or to manifest it is invested with interest. It lies so near the heart that it is impossible that the various influences which are forming the opinions of men should not affect their conceptions in relation to it also. As a fact, it has been so, and the spirit of the age is as manifest in our eclesiastical as in our social or commercial or political life.

In America, no doubt, the causes which have produced such results among ourselves are yet more active; but America is still a young country, and its institutions of all kinds are still more or less in embryo, and are developing new forms in harmony with the genius of the people and the peculiarities of their situation. Among them we expect a greater craving for novelty, and a much more extended and sweeping change would not produce the same impression there as in a country where every change is an invasion of established forms and venerable ideas, and wars against the strongest instincts of a people peculiarly conservative in spirit and character. America inherited systems from us, but in the very process of being transplanted they were freed from traditions which restrained and regulated their development here, and it was only to be expected that in the freer atmosphere of the New World, and amid less conventional surroundings, they should exhibit many varieties from the old type. What in the old country would be an extreme and violent change might with them only be a natural and necessary growth. The absence of a State Church, and the absolute social and political equality enjoyed by men of all opinions, is alone sufficient to create such a difference between the two peoples

as to render a fair comparison between the ecclesiastical changes that have taken place in them all but impossible, and, if possible, of no practical value. It is not encouraging either to the enemies of the gospel or to those timid believers who talk as though the perpetuation of its influence depended on the protection of the State to find that religious life in America, amid the changed conditions of its society, and in the absence of any favour from the State, is more vigorous and energetic than among ourselves. Its intensity and freedom may sometimes accelerate changes of method which among us are accomplished more slowly. At all events they create a difference of condition which makes attempts at comparison unprofitable.

Leaving, therefore, the United States out of account, it is safe to say that there is no country in which Church systems have undergone a change which approaches, even in a remote degree, to that which has been effected among ourselves. Ultramontanism has doubtless wrought a complete revolution in the Romish Church, and has placed it in a different attitude to the peoples among whom that Church is still powerful. But even that has been felt in this country at least as much as on the Continent, and is the more deserving of study here because here the contest between Rome and Protestantism is most real, and its strain most severe. It may sound like a paradox, and yet surely it is true, that to the Protestant people of England these "new fashions in religion," which the Vatican has introduced, have appeared of more grave significance than to those continental nations, with the exception of the people of Belgium, for whom they seem to possess a more direct interest.

I.

As has been said, the changes of the century have not involved the downfall of any of our Church systems. It is possible to go further, and say that in none of them can we find any of those indications of decay, or even weakness, which would lead any candid and thoughtful observer to prophesy their approaching downfall. Ardent Erastians may fancy that the Free Churches of England, after weathering the storms and troubles of centuries, after vindicating their right to exist by the unquestioned service which they have rendered to the nation and the kingdom of Christ, and after attaining a numerical strength and moral influence hardly, if at all inferior, to the Established Church itself, are silently but rapidly crumbling to pieces; that their bodies will before long be consigned to the tomb, and that their only hope of a future life is in the resurrection of their glorified spirits in a comprehensive Establishment, where all individual conviction will be suppressed and the will of the State be supreme; and in a blissful future, when scruples of conscience will be regarded as painful memories of an evil past, and perfect unity be enjoyed in the calm repose of a passionless and faithless culture. On the other hand, there may be uncompromising enemies of sacerdotalism and hierarchical rule who fancy that the root of both is to be found in a State Church, and that in the coming era of religious equality, no place will be left for evil growths contrary to the whole genius of Christianity. So, too, the believers in a Catholic Church may please themselves with the hope that all heretics will yet submit, and while Anglicans dream confidently of the reconciliation of Dissenters, Ultramontanes may

indulge in the same certainty of the submission of Anglicans themselves to the Papal See. But such anticipations on all sides are rather the longings and forecasts of a passionate hope than the results of careful induction from accepted facts.

Assuredly there is not any symptom even of incipient disease threatening such a disastrous consummation to any of our Protestant communities. Disastrous it may well be regarded, for it is difficult to see how any of the distinctive forms under which Church life has developed itself in Protestant Christendom could cease to exist, unless the gospel were beginning to lose its hold upon the hearts and lives of its men. There are few more useless occupations in which men can engage than that of proselytism; there is no dream more chimerical than that of the sectary, who hopes to see his own system extend by the overthrow of others. Between authority and conscience, between priestly assumption and individual liberty, between a religion of the spirit and a religion of forms and ritual, there must be conflict *à outrance*. But between the several forms of Church polity there is no need for this perpetual antagonism, and it can only be carried on at the cost of that religion which must be dearer to all than any of their *isms*. The weakening of any of our Protestant systems does not necessarily mean an accession of strength to any other, but, in all probability, points rather to a decay of the faith common to all.

At present there are not even indications that any one of these systems is gaining decided advantage over the rest. There are signs everywhere that each is exercising an influence, more or less manifest, upon its rivals, and it is a fair subject for consideration as to

where the leavening force is most powerful. Certain it is that communities are sometimes permeated by ideas to an extent of which they are themselves unconscious, until the effects are revealed in changes which at one time would have seemed impracticable. This is a process which has been going on in our Church systems. They have told upon one another gradually and silently, until now there may be traced in them distinct resemblances, which may be very displeasing to bigoted precisians of all parties, but which dispassionate observers will regard rather as evidencing the growth of wisdom and charity in our Church affairs. Congregationalists flatter themselves that their teaching and influence have not been lost upon any of the Churches around, and they, in their turn, would point to facts which to them indicate that Congregationalism has received as well as given. Still the dominant idea of each system remains untouched, and those who are most ready to profit by the example of others, and adopt innovations that do not militate against their own fundamental principle, cling to it with a tenacity that is not less because it has been proved to be the more likely to relax its grasp of the central truth, but with it is associated a capacity for adapting it to varying conditions.

Possibly the importance attached to the points which differentiate our several forms of polity is materially reduced, not only in the view of a world disposed to cry a plague on all our Churches, and to regard our controversies as idle disputes about curious points, which can have no living interest for rational human beings, but even in the estimation of those who have decided denominational preferences. But this does not foreshadow the absorption of any one Church in another. So great a change could be

the result only of a strong conviction that the absorbing Church had vindicated its right to some exclusive claim, either by overwhelming demonstration of its authority, or by service of transcendent excellence, or that the Church which was absorbed had given some equally conclusive proof of its weakness. But this is exactly what is not implied by the more catholic view of the relations between their several systems which prevails among enlightened Protestants. That broad conception of their sectarian divisions is due rather to a feeling that the world, with its variety of temperament, character, and culture, needs them all, and that to destroy any would be to withdraw influences which tell upon a particular class, whose wants are not met by others, and that that class, whatever its importance may be, would not be attracted by any other, but would, in all probability, be lost to Christianity. Everywhere there may, nay, must be, need of reform. In some cases there may have been developments which are essentially injurious not only to the particular Church in which they appear, but to Christianity itself, which must be resisted, even though the removal of the accretions should be fatal to the system. But this does not affect the point, that it is not possible to cast Church life into one mould, and that instead of those strivings after uniformity, which have wrought such evil in past days, the aim should be the cultivation of a spirit of true unity.

II.

The address of the Archbishop of Canterbury, at his recent triennial visitation, furnishes abundant evidence of the growth of this temper. If there is any man

whose official position might dispose him to a contrary feeling, the Primate is certainly the man. The State has placed him at the head of the National Church, the only Church which, according to some of our teachers, has any right to exist. Dissenters are rebels against the authority which the law has committed to him, and that authority his clergy, and the defenders of his Church generally, hold him bound to maintain, not so much for his own sake as for that of the Church of which he is the spiritual ruler. Ambition can hardly covet a more exalted position, and every prejudice of his nature as well as all the influences of his surroundings would lead him to guard its dignity with all jealousy. Yet the archbishop feels himself constrained, partly in obedience to the catholic instincts of a true Christian heart, but partly also as a man of practical judgment, who feels that he has to deal with facts and not mere ideals, to speak of these ecclesiastical rebels as fellow-workers in the kingdom of God. In theory they may be schismatics, but in fact they are contending for the same faith, serving the same Master, labouring to promote the same ends, as the Church to which they find themselves unable to conform.

It will be our own fault if all the Protestant communities throughout the world, Episcopal and non-Episcopal, which adhere to the Apostolic faith, do not feel that their cause is indissolubly united with our own. . . . The Church of Christ throughout the world would, it must be remembered, be deprived of a vast proportion of its worshippers if we left out of sight our Christian brotherhood with non-Episcopal congregations at home, and the overwhelming mass of such congregations in the United States of America. Thus, I trust, we English Churchmen are learning more and more to realize once again that great idea which was so powerful of old to stir men's hearts and make them help each other, that there is a vast community cemented by Christian faith and principle

which, amid all national and other special differences, joins together the whole body of those who worship God in Christ.[1]

And again—

The existence of Dissent from the National Church is a fact which we cannot overlook. We deplore it, but we cannot act as if there were no such thing in the land as dissent on the part of good men; and I am sure that we all feel that it is our duty to meet the inevitable state of circumstances in which we find ourselves in a tolerant Christian spirit.[2]

A declaration like this, coming from the chair of Canterbury, surely marks a new era in our ecclesiastical relations. It is not for its novelty, or originality, or its special catholicity, that such an utterance is remarkable, but for the authority which belongs to it as coming from the Primate of all England. Not only have numbers of men thought or said as much before, but the facts were too patent to be denied except by extreme partizans. What is striking is that the Archbishop of Canterbury should have given them this public recognition, and have accentuated the record by placing it thus prominently in his address to his own clergy. The more his statements are examined in detail and in relation to the rest of his charge, the more significant do they appear. There is not any sign that the archbishop has any idea of abating the hostility of Nonconformists to the Establishment by the cultivation of kindly relations with them as Christians. In frank and manly style he acknowledges that in relation to the rights of the State Church there is difference, and difference that must produce conflict, and yet he maintains there need not be estrangement and hostility. He thus proves that he has grasped the true idea of Christian union, which is not

[1] *The Church of the Future*, pp. 13, 14. [2] Ibid. p. 17.

the suppression of differences, but the manifestation of a tolerant Christian temper through them all.

Nor is his catholicity of so molluscous a type, and so lacking in all strength of principle, that it degenerates into indifference to theological doctrine altogether. The body in which he desires to see unity manifested consists of those who "worship God in Christ." The language is general, and may no doubt be extended beyond what he himself intended, or what loyalty to the gospel would justify. But it is certainly very different from that weak sentiment which some dignify with the name of religion, and even of Christianity, although the votaries of this vague and hazy system are not quite certain whether there is a God to claim their worship, or, if there be, whether it is through Christ that they are able to approach Him. Here is a distinctly Christian basis for the fellowship; and though the description may be abused or misrepresented, it is not easy to see how it could be well improved, either on the side of comprehensiveness or exclusiveness. For from the spiritual confederation of Christendom none should be debarred who "worship God in Christ;" and it is certainly hard to see how any who do not can have the semblance of a claim to admission. Christians, it cannot be too strongly insisted upon, are followers of Christ. Not all those who, according to their lights, are trying to be good and to live for the good of others are Christians, but those only who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and serve Him as their Master, whose struggles after a holy life are inspired by love to Him, aided by faith in Him, prosecuted for His sake, conducted in obedience to His will, and anticipate as their one reward admission to His joy. There have been noble-

minded pagans, but it would be an abuse of language to call them Christians. Marçus Aurelius was not a Christian, though he was a man of lofty moral purpose and rare virtue, with much of the Christian spirit in him; and there may be men of his type to-day, with moral qualities as eminent, and yet as utterly without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. No judgment is passed upon such men when it is said that they have neither part nor lot in Christ's kingdom. They would scorn the idea of the fellowship themselves. They do not profess to be Christians, and they are not Christians. What the Archbishop recognizes is the brotherhood of Christians, as manifest in the unity of faith, principle, and worship which underlies the varieties of creed, polity, or ritual.

III.

It is a successor of Laud who has propounded this catholic view of Anglican Christendom, and such an utterance, coming from such a quarter, is a very marked sign that the old dispensation is passing away and a new one is beginning to take its place. There is a very remarkable confession made by the Archbishop, which makes this recognition of the Christian brotherhood of Dissenters still more significant. He is clear-sighted enough to perceive the strength of a feeling among his own clergy which would make this view peculiarly obnoxious to them, and yet he does not hesitate to place himself in direct antagonism to it. Speaking of the influence exerted by the "Oxford revival of forty or fifty years ago," he says—

> Still, I think this must be granted on the other hand—that the teaching thus introduced or resuscitated, notwithstanding all its claims to catholicity, was and is based on a somewhat narrow

system, and has confined Churchmen's sympathies in the direction in which before they were ready to expand. My predecessors in the Episcopate had, I think, less difficulty than we should experience now-a-days in welcoming the co-operation of such men as was Robert Hall in the days of our fathers, and wishing them God-speed in their labours to resist prevailing infidelity.[1]

The phenomenon is certainly remarkable, but it is one eminently characteristic of an age which is full of such contrasts. At no period has Church sentiment been so exalted, and yet never has it been met, even within the confines of the Established Church itself, by an opposite current of true catholic feeling more strong and decided. But so it is everywhere. By the side of the most extreme and intolerant assertions of authority we have a rationalism more daring in its spirit, more audacious in its denials, more defiant in its attitude, and more reckless in its speculations than at any previous period. Science has so far extended its empire, and brought so many regions that were once supposed to belong to the world of mystery within the range of its law, that its teachers may seem to have some excuse even for the extravagant pretensions which would seat it on the throne of universal empire, and leave faith without a province of the vast dominions over which its sceptre once extended; and yet on the same pages which record some of these wonderful achievements of science is inscribed the story of some outburst of fanatical superstition which carries us back to mediæval times, and makes us feel that the spell of these mysteries is still upon large masses of our people. It is an age of extremes, and not very tolerant of the pleasant compromises which endured in less exciting periods; but these extremes may be either in the one direction or

[1] *Church of the Future*, p. 16.

the other. Men are disturbed in the quiet resting-places where their fathers dwelt at ease, and the self-same influences acting upon them, as in the case of the two distinguished brothers, whose story is itself a picture of the age, have carried them far as the poles asunder. Sometimes the two currents strangely blend; thus the Anglican school combines with the most profound reverence for antiquity, which approaches to a superstition, an eager thirst for novelty that seems ready to adopt any expedient if it can impress the popular imagination. It exalts the authority of the Holy Catholic Church, and claims to be its representative, and yet is willing, in a spirit of strong utilitarianism, to accept a lesson in practical method from any sect of Dissenters. But the characteristic feature of the times is the presence of these two opposing influences, each of which is developed to its utmost limit, while both are impatient of all attempts to mediate between them. It is the age of the Ultramontane and the Agnostic, and the one point on which they agree is that the future will belong exclusively to one of them, and that a final conflict must determine which shall remain master of the field.

The Primate furnishes an illustration of the struggle between these opposing tendencies. The Ritualist party, who unquestionably have done much to increase the influence of the Church of England, would maintain the rights of what they call Catholicity, and treat Dissenters as schismatics and aliens from the spiritual commonwealth, with whom there can be no religious fellowship. But the Primate knows that the strongest influences of the day are against such exclusiveness, that a temper at once more liberal and more practical is abroad, and that if there be anywhere a disposition to revive

Church authority, its tendency is towards that Church in which authority finds its legitimate representative. He spoke the feelings of the great body of the laity of his own Church and of all Churches in those words of soberness, common sense, and Christian charity, in which he acknowledged in effect that all our Protestant Churches form part of one confederation, whose members may on some points have different opinions and conflicting interests, but who yet have common principles, common sympathies, and common ends, the transcendent importance of which may well serve to moderate the eagerness with which sectional objects are pursued, and to prevent the rivalry of principles from degenerating into the petty warfare of hostile sects.

IV.

This is the true ideal of Christian union, and there are few, if any, among Dissenters who would not heartily unite in the desire of the Archbishop for its realization. If there are no signs that any of our religious bodies are prepared to give up their own distinctive polity, there are abundant proofs that the leaders of all are less disposed to insist on an exclusive scriptural authority for their system, and more ready to concede the wisdom of a diversity in form of Church government, more inclined to treat the question of polity as one of expediency rather than of Divine prescription. The advocate of each of the three leading systems finds, or thinks he finds, its germ in the New Testament. The Episcopalian points to Timothy and Titus as diocesan bishops. The Presbyterian discovers the model of synodical action in the meeting at

Jerusalem, by which the difficult questions that had arisen between the Jew and the Gentile were decided. The Congregationalist finds his system everywhere, and his strong belief that the primitive Churches were self-governing societies, each under the presidency of its own bishop, is confirmed by the admissions of the more candid class of opponents. Tracing the history of the Church through the centuries, the Episcopalian would urge that he had been the guardian of order; the Presbyterian, that he had furnished the example of the most perfect organization and the most careful orthodoxy; the Congregationalist, that in the Churches of his type liberty had had its perfect work and the unrestrained energies of Christian zeal their fullest development. There is no probability that any party will abandon its ground or materially change its contention. But the more reflective and candid men on all sides are free to admit that there are points in which their rivals have an advantage over them. They believe of course that, on the whole, the advantage belongs to the system which they have conscientiously adopted; but in adhering to it, they accept it as a human development of a Divine thought, in which there are sure to be imperfections. If the Apostle could speak of himself and his brethren as "earthen vessels" in which was "heavenly treasure," why need we hesitate to take the same view of our Church systems? Following out this suggestion, we may expect that in them there will be not only flaws, but diversities, according to the character of the minds which have shaped them, and that these very diversities will only render them more suited to the varied wants of the world. Let this be realized and men will cease to dream of uniformity, and will not

greatly care to win other Christians to their own special systems. Their love to their own Church need not be less sincere, nor their efforts for its prosperity less earnest and untiring, because they believe that there are those to whom a different kind of Church life is more suited, and whose spiritual natures will develope with greater richness and beauty under a system which on themselves would exert a cramping and deforming influence.

This view is utterly fatal to High Church theories on all sides, but practically it is only with the advanced section of the Anglican Church that it comes into conflict. If there be those among Dissenting communities who hold that theirs is the one Divine system, and that all who are outside its circle are outside the Church of Christ, they take their own independent action, and have neither the power nor the desire to force their views upon others. With the High Church party in the Establishment it is very different. They speak in the name of the nation, and from the lofty pedestal of a public position, and thus they compel attention which would be refused to them as individuals. It is not possible to ignore them and their claim, which is asserted with a dogmatism and vehemence in exact proportion to the weakness of the evidence adduced in its favour, and which cannot be admitted by Dissenters without a practical confession that they are not of the heavenly kingdom. But it is very easy to exaggerate the force which this party actually possesses. Its convictions are strong, and by some of its members are defended with great ability. In its ranks are to be found some men of brilliant gifts, and numbers of devoted piety and pure consecration. It has a high social standing, and exercises

great influence in a certain circle. Various circumstances have told in its favour, and secured for it tacit acquiescence where it has not been able to secure active sympathy. Between it and Erastianism there can be no real concord, and yet Erastians, alarmed for the security of their favourite institution, have tolerated the aggressions of sacerdotalism. It has profited even by the growth of the Liberalism which it hates, and has won sympathy and support from numbers who repudiate its claims and detest its principles, but who honour many of its teachers for the lives they lead and the noble service which they render.

Still its power is not so formidable as might at first appear. Undoubtedly it is strong among the hierarchy, strong in diocesan synods and Church Congress, strong in Convocation, and strong wherever clerical influence is dominant. But it is not strong among the laity even of the Establishment. It must not be supposed that those who tolerate its assumptions, and even claim for its more extreme section a liberty of development which would establish Congregationalism within an Episcopal Church, and permit all kinds of varieties under the shadow of an Act of Uniformity, are therefore reconciled to that which they thus permit. They see no mode of resistance which would not peril the existence of the National Church, and therefore they endure. But they do not approve; and when they can do it without danger of compromising themselves as Church defenders, they do not hesitate to scorn the authority and protest against the exclusiveness to which the stern exigencies of the situation make them reluctantly consent. There must surely be times when it must occur to them that they are in fact sacrificing both the objects which

they have at heart, ministering to the growth of priestism which they hate, and instead of securing the Establishment, indirectly contributing to its overthrow. Every day sacerdotalism becomes more rampant in consequence of their weak connivance, and it will ultimately rend the Establishment asunder. For a time the nation may be deluded, but as soon as it perceives that the Establishment is governed by sacerdotalism, it will make an end of the Establishment. For the present, however, high Anglicans are the gainers by the Erastian fear of any action that might interfere with the present relations of Church and State; and even should the result of their advance be the downfall of the National Church, it is to them a matter of less importance, as they have a faith with a vitality independent of the State.

But they could indulge no greater delusion than to suppose that the nation, or any considerable section of it, is with them in their claim to be the one true Church in the country. On the contrary, there is an ever-growing resentment on the part not only of Dissenters, but of the independent laity of their own Church, against everything which tends to isolate it and its clergy from kindred Protestant communities. There are multitudes of sincere Churchmen, and their number is continually on the increase, whose loyalty to their own Church is associated with a large-hearted charity towards Nonconformists. They are Churchmen by preference, or by descent, or by force of circumstances. They have grown up into a hearty attachment to the forms and arrangements of a Church dear to them as the Church of their fathers, and linked in their memories with all the most sacred seasons and circumstances of their lives. The simple but sublime words of its liturgy have a fas-

cination for them entirely apart from their theological teaching or their artistic beauty. They have that charm which belongs to the words familiar to us in our childhood—a charm which endears to the Scotch peasant the homely words of the national version of the Psalms, and which causes an English Nonconformist to see a beauty in some of the hymns of Watts which offend against the laws of rhyme and rhythm. They not only prefer the ritual of the Episcopal Church, but they desire that that Church should remain the Church of the nation; partly because they shrink from the disturbances which would result from the removal of an institution so deeply rooted in the associations, traditions, and habits of the people; partly because they cannot reconcile their minds to the idea of a nation without a national Church and a national faith; and partly because they fear that without a public provision for religious teaching and worship large districts in the country would be left to lapse into heathenism. Their loyalty to the Church is stainless, but it is not so blind and undiscriminating as to induce them to approve claims which are as mistaken in policy as they are untenable in principle. They are as much opposed to the spirit as to the doctrines and ritual of Rome, and are resolved to prevent the intrusion of either into the Reformed Church of England. If its clergy will bear their honours meekly, they are content that they should retain them, but if they will flaunt their titles and prerogatives in the face of those who are as true Christians and as loyal citizens as themselves; if they show themselves unable to learn the spirit of comprehensiveness which is characteristic of the age; if they persist in limiting the kingdom of heaven to their own Church, if not to their own party in it, laymen

will leave the Establishment to fight its own battles, if they do not become instruments in the overthrow of an institution whose clergy show that they have lost the character of nationality altogether.

V.

This is distinctively the lay sentiment of the day, and it prevails in all Churches. There are exceptions. There are ecclesiastically-minded, or, to speak more correctly, clerically-minded laymen who are as zealous for Church power as the highest cleric in the land. But it is not from men of this type that the views of the English people are to be learned. Those views are expressed by the Primate rather than by the Bishop of Lincoln. In truth, if there is a bishop who throws himself into the work of this stirring age, as one who is in harmony with all its loftiest aspirations and most generous impulses, who thinks more of usefulness than of dignity, who scorns the conventional ideas of his Church and his order when they interfere with his work for the public good, who frankly recognizes the work of Nonconformists and enters into fraternal relations with them even while ready, on every fitting opportunity, to combat the principles of their Nonconformity, there is the man whom the laity of the Church delight to honour. The lay mind, whether in Conformist or Nonconformist Churches, is impatient of priestly arrogance and subtle sectarian distinctions. For consistency, faithfulness, zeal it has high respect; for official pretensions only contempt. It is independent, practical, touched with the scientific spirit of the times even where there is no great scientific knowledge and none of the scepticism

which science sometimes engenders, modern in its views and tastes, and therefore very indisposed to listen to those who would interpose a fine-spun theory in contradiction to the plain teachings of common sense and to the hindering of the public good, especially if the first and most obvious result be the strengthening of priestly power.

This temper is regarded by the priests as they have always treated similar developments—as a sign of ignorance, or of absolute incapacity to enter into the delicate question of ecclesiastical right, perhaps, of positive unregeneracy and unbelief. "This people knoweth not the law, and is accursed!" is no new cry, and it expresses the feeling, which is just as powerful to-day as it ever was in the past, of those who find the common sense and justice of mankind rebelling against their claims to authority. But the denunciations produce little impression on the strong intelligence and independent temper of men who see the tendency of the assumptions which they repudiate, and who feel that the only effectual mode of resistance is to challenge the principle on which they rest. They respect their own clergy, but more for the sake of their work than their office; and they are not slow to make them understand that they concede to them no exclusive right, but honour all other faithful ministers of the gospel as fellow-workers for the kingdom of God.

The spread of High Church views among a section of the clergy, so large and so constantly increasing that it promises ere long to include the whole body, has served to intensify this liberal feeling. The influence which the High Church party has exerted in developing new life within the Church, and in extending its usefulness among the people, is fully recognized; but even that does not re-

concile those who perceive the real drift of the movement to the sacerdotal teachings by which it is characterized. They gratefully accept the good, but not the less strenuously do they oppose the exclusive claims which appeal to such service as their justification and support. Evidences of this are continually cropping up, probably so trivial in themselves, and of so ephemeral a character, as to escape notice, and yet all indicative of the growth of a sentiment eminently encouraging to all friends of liberty and Protestantism, and as fatal to the anticipations of any who believe in the probability of a revival of priestly power in the country.

A lay utterance of this kind, given some two years ago, may be quoted as an example. It is noteworthy because of the high position of the speaker, and because of the special circumstances under which he spoke. The Duke of Devonshire is unquestionably one of the leading Anglican laymen, and one who has given unquestionable proof that his attachment to the Church is neither hesitating nor languid. The occasion on which the speech referred to was delivered was one that was calculated to rouse all his religious enthusiasm, and to restrain the expression of any sentiment that might even seem to be in hostility to the Church and the clergy. He was presiding at a meeting held in the rising town of Barrow-in-Furness to celebrate the opening of four churches in one day. Here was a marvellous proof of the strength of Church sentiment as well as of the earnestness, liberality, and practical judgment with which Churchmen were setting themselves to adapt their system to the great changes which the rise of new industries must make in the distribution of the people. The Duke himself was a muni-

ficent contributor to the buildings, and was heartily interested in the work. It would seem as though he felt it necessary, for these very reasons, to utter a note of warning, which to many of the clergy must have been very disquieting. They had before them visible signs of the attachment of the people to the Church, but they must not be allowed to delude themselves into the belief that these meant an endorsement of the pretensions of the clergy. On the contrary, the Duke distinctly told them that the attempt to push the exclusive prerogatives of the Anglican priesthood was just as offensive to true Protestants in their own Church as to the Dissenters outside—

> If (said his Grace) everything relating to the Church was as prosperous as the erection of new buildings and the additions to the clergy, the Church would indeed be in a flourishing condition ; but it was notorious that there was another side to the question. We cannot conceal from ourselves that there are matters in its *internal state* which give rise to considerable anxiety and which not a little qualify the satisfaction we should otherwise have on occasions like the present.

These were ominous words for an Archbishop and his clergy to hear from one who was at the very time giving such unmistakable proof of his devotion to the Church. Had an enemy spoken thus, his words might have been ascribed to hostile prejudice. But it is a leading and liberal supporter of the Church of England, representing the views of a powerful class, who distinctly tells the clergy that the nation will not tolerate a priesthood that sets itself above the law, and would in fact make the State the subject of the Church. The warning was one which tens of thousands of the laity would be prepared to endorse. The reply of the Archbishop showed that he perfectly understood the point of the warning,

delicate as was the form in which it was conveyed. "Allusion," he said, "had been made by the noble Chairman, and naturally so, to the painful phase of things existing in the Church. Without the allusion the subject could not have been completely treated. But even taking that into account, he did hope and trust that that was a passing phase—that the symptoms of disobedience to law which had been heard of, and which were manifest, would not, upon consideration of the subject, continue to exist, because in point of fact no body whatever could subsist upon the principle of not obeying its own laws and constitution. Therefore they might hope that in the long run that spirit of obedience would prevail even more than the proceedings of law courts or the like."

But all the optimism of the Archbishop cannot alter hard facts, which have become even more menacing since that date. His attempts to remove the unfavourable impression that had evidently been made on the mind of the Duke were well meant, but they only showed how keenly he felt that the "lawlessness" of the clergy was as the ghost of Banquo at their feast of charity. That lawlessness grows, and is the fruit of a sacerdotalism, to whose pretensions Englishmen will not long submit. It has already produced a strong recoil. A growing liberality of sentiment is apparent even among those who have no sympathy with the principles of Liberalism. Numbers who are good Churchmen are alarmed on the one hand at the growth of priestism, while on the other, their good sense and English love of justice make them feel that Dissenting Churches cannot be ignored, and ought not to be doomed to a position of inferiority solely because they cannot accept

the conditions of the ecclesiastical system as laid down by law, or, indeed, tolerate the action of public law in matters of conscience at all.

This feeling found strong expression from Sir T. Dyke Acland, one of the most respected of our country gentlemen. "Clergymen must bring themselves to recognize the fact, that the laity are more and more willing to recognize ministerial service, *regardless of the denomination of the person by whom it is rendered.*" A more terse and pointed rebuke to the whole theory of the priesthood could not well have been administered, and coming from such a quarter, it clearly represents the prevalent tone among a most influential section of the laity.

VI.

Perhaps the most remarkable public manifestation of this temper which has been seen, was the vote of the House of Lords in favour of Lord Harrowby's amendment on the Burials Bill of Lord Beaconsfield's government. In opposition to their own leaders, in disregard of their ordinary party obligations, in direct antagonism to the Convocation and a majority of the clergy, so overwhelming as to approach to unanimity, a number of Conservative peers voted in favour of the admission of the Dissenting minister and his services into the parochial burying-ground. Their action practically ended the controversy and fixed the terms on which a settlement has been effected. Those terms, unsatisfactory as they are to us, who have no faith in the compromise of a right, afford a very striking illustration of the tendency of the English laity in the very quarters where the attachment to the Establishment is most pronounced. The restriction of the

services admissible in the parochial graveyards to those which are "Christian and orderly" is in violation of the principles for which Nonconformists have always contended, but it is an assertion of another principle, and of one which tells very seriously against the assumption of the Anglican priesthood. Those who would have thrown the graveyards open to all citizens, subject only to the conditions necessary for the maintenance of proper decorum, would have asserted only that these graveyards were the property of the nation, and that to them all the people should enjoy equal rights of access. Those who introduce the distinction between Christian and non-Christian equally enforce the control of the nation, and so set aside the claim of the Episcopal Church to treat these grounds as private property—a decision which was rendered still more emphatic by the proper refusal to deal with the burying-grounds of Dissenting Churches on the same principles. But they institute an entirely new religious test, and in doing it, practically place the clergy of the Church and Dissenting ministers on the same footing. They do not stand on the broad ground of liberty and refuse to take any cognizance of the religious opinions of men. On the contrary, their decision is formed in consideration of those opinions. They will tolerate only Christian services, but if the Christian character be preserved they will not allow priestly pretensions to stand in the way of public justice. The change is much greater than they themselves may have perceived. It is as directly in contravention of the principle of the Establishment as the more extreme and consistent course would have been, and it is even more adverse to the assumption of the clergy. Practically it means that there are, even among Conservative members

of the House of Lords, who are supposed to be the most exclusive Churchmen in the nation, not a few who, while they uphold the Established Church as an institution necessary for the religious good of the people, regard it as only one in a family of Churches—in their view the noblest, purest, and most useful of any—but still only one among a number of communities, all of which are entitled to sympathy and support because of the testimony they are bearing for Christ and the services they are doing in the moral and spiritual culture of the nation.

Various influences have contributed to produce this state of feeling—some of the earth, earthy, but others of a higher and more spiritual character. The growing power of Dissent has compelled some recognition of its claims. It is impossible to ignore communities after which half the religious part of the people have gone. They may be a very disagreeable factor among the social and political as well as the religious forces of the times, but the last possible mode of dealing with them is to treat them as non-existent. They outlived the troubles of a stormy infancy, and passed through the perils of a weak and languishing childhood; and when on all reasonable calculation they ought to have died out, they revealed a singular vitality and capacity of growth, and developed into a manhood of great vigour. The signs of the kingdom of God are on their history. They were but as the grain of mustard seed; they have become a spreading tree, under whose branches not a few of the birds of the air find shelter. They have forced their way into universities, into municipal parliaments, into the senate, into the very Cabinet of the Sovereign. They are recognized as among the forces by which the character of the legislature is determined,

and by which ministries are made and unmade. To treat them as non-existent is only to war against the inexorable logic of facts.

But there are nobler sentiments at work tending to the same issue. Candid men see that Dissenting communities are doing a great part of the religious work of the nation. It may not be done in the way that they approve, but it is done, and they are constrained to admit that it would be an evil thing for the nation if this influence had not been employed in the past, or if it were to be withdrawn now. As soon as this is admitted, the absurdity of a theory which denies to Churches and to men who are working for the kingdom of God a place in that kingdom becomes apparent. Sometimes it is common sense, sometimes it is a true and enlightened conscience which snaps the bonds of mere ecclesiastical theory. But broken they certainly are in innumerable cases, and in not a few to an extent of which Churchmen themselves are hardly conscious. They do not falter in loyalty to their own Church, but they have learned to form more generous estimates of other Churches.

VII.

There is a practical temper, eminently characteristic of the times, which leads so many to feel that there can be no material, still less any vital, difference between the Churches if the same great characteristics are found in the members of all. There are numbers who regard all the questions at issue as curious matters concerning the law in which men who have to play their part in the grave and urgent business of a practical world cannot be expected to show any interest. They are wearied of

assumptions which appear to them contradicted by common sense and history; but even to these they will extend a contemptuous indifference if the men by whom they are put forward establish a claim to tolerance, and even respect, by honest service to God and man. They do not trouble themselves to examine the long pedigree of the bishops, and simply laugh at the Nag's Head story, and similar problems, which have caused many good men such serious trouble. They do not presume to adjudicate on the merits of the many controversies between the Catholic and the heretic, though when they have occasionally looked a little more carefully into the story of these conflicts, they have been forced to the conviction that the way which men have called heresy has often been the path of truth, and freedom, and righteousness. Of knotty questions about the validity of orders and their bearing on the efficacy of sacraments, of "notes" of catholicity and where they are to be discovered, and of lines of apostolic succession, they are profoundly ignorant, and regard them all as belonging to the infinitely little. What they do see is that in all Churches are to be found men intent on doing the will of God and serving their generation; and they are disposed to regard the systems which are alike producing these results as possessing an equal authority. No Church has a monopoly of goodness, therefore no Church ought to be credited with a monopoly of scriptural right.

Undoubtedly there are here some serious fallacies which must be dealt with afterwards, but it is not to be questioned that this broad view has a considerable substratum of truth. Taken as an argument against the pretensions of any one Church to be co-extensive with Christendom, it is conclusive; at least, in the absence of

any definite scriptural warrant for such exclusive claims. Accepting, for example, the principle that where there is no bishop and no priest there can be no Church and no sacrament, we are driven to the belief that great Christian communities whose work has been honoured of God to the extension of His kingdom are not Churches. They have in their ranks multitudes who are earnestly seeking to live up to the Christian ideal, preachers who expound the truths of the gospel with a clearness and force equal to anything which can be found in the so-called Catholic Church, generous givers whose liberal contributions swell the fund of Christian benevolence, and untiring workers who are of the very bone and muscle of the army which is contending against the ignorance, the unbelief, and the vice of the day. They have reared apologists who have done noble service in defence of the faith, have sent out missionaries who have subdued kingdoms for Christ, have trained martyrs who have not counted their own lives dear that they might win Christ. There is hardly one in that wonderful catalogue of the achievements of faith as given in the Epistle to the Hebrews which they have not in some degree reproduced. Through faith they have "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of the fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the alien." In the annals of their struggle for existence, their patient endurance of persecution, their wide-spread missionary enterprises, are deeds which may be truly described in language glowing as this; deeds which give their members a place in that general assembly and Church

of the first-born, "of whom the world was not worthy," but whose names are written in heaven. Yet on this theory the communities which have thus been gathered in the name of Christ, whose one prayer and effort has been that they might be "living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men," whose members have lived for Christ, worked for Christ, suffered for Christ, died for Christ, are not Churches of Christ.

Among the members of these rival communities—the Catholic Church and the sects which are not Catholic—are men who, whether they are to be judged by their public or their private life, present very striking features of identity. Take them away from the current controversies of the hour, or those which separate them from each other so far as Christian fellowship is concerned, and their sympathies run in the same channel. They cannot utter the same Shibboleths, but they kindle with enthusiasm for the same Leader, and they contend for the same great principles. Their lives are drawn through varied scenes, and the prominent objects of pursuit in them differ according to their diversity in taste, or in culture, or in social standing, but the differences do not at all coincide with their sectarian distinctions, and underneath them all is one deep foundation of spiritual sympathy and purpose. On questions of ritual they are hopelessly divided, and yet if you listen to their prayers, or their songs of praise, there is striking oneness, so that even the most rigid Catholic does not hesitate to express his deepest religious sentiments in strains which have been prepared by one whom his theory regards as an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and they seem as appropriate in his Catholic sanctuary as in the heretical conventicle which is their original home.

Everywhere it is only in method and plan that they seem to differ—in aim and principle, and in all the deepest sentiments of the heart, they are one. Some men have a faith in freedom so absolute that they desire to let it have its perfect work, and face all possible consequences; while others believe more in the force of authority and tradition, in organization and discipline; but where Christ is owned as Lord, the object with both is to bring humanity into obedience to the will of God. They differ as to the rights of the individual conscience and the limits by which its liberty ought to be restrained, but they are one in their desire for the supremacy of the gospel. The one holds that the end can be best secured by wise methods of protection, the other that truth never flourishes so well as when under the bracing atmosphere of freedom. These rival ideas lead to the establishment of rival systems, to which strong loyalty and devotion are invoked on either side. But these systems themselves would lose their attraction for their most fervid votaries if it could be proved that they were contrary to the will of Christ, or unfavourable to the advance of His gospel. The gospel is greater than any polity, and Christ is more precious than any Church, to all except those with whom the Church has become a mere fetish, and of them it is not too much to say that they are fallen from grace.

One is the Master of all these different communities; and if it is not always so manifest as could be desired that they all are brethren, yet, when the veil that hides the private experiences of Christian hearts is lifted, that unity, often hidden amid the stress and pressure of our heated controversies, becomes beautifully apparent. The biographies of Christian men teach us what we

should not always have learned from their outer life while they were in this world. In the deepest and most real utterances of the soul, as we are allowed to hear them, there is no special note of catholicity which distinguishes the members of one community from all others, but the most extreme advocate of Church authority will often show a simple trust, humble penitence, and adoring love equal to that of the stoutest champion of Christian liberty. In the closet and in the home, in the sweet communion of loving Christian friends and the anxious hopes and watchings of earnest Christian workers, in the secret wrestlings of the heart with God and its tender yearnings over those it would fain win for Christ, in the self-accusings of a soul intent on great holiness and painfully sensible of its failures, and in the rapturous joy begotten by a living sense of the Master's presence in the cries of faith for help in hours of temptation and weakness, and in the devout thanksgivings over victory won through Christ, we know neither Churchman nor Dissenter, neither Episcopalian nor Presbyterian, neither Congregationalist nor Methodist; nay, if we look at the loftiest examples of piety in the Romish Church, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant, but all are one in Christ Jesus.

These are not mere passing observations based on narrow experience and limited induction. They can be sustained by a long array of facts drawn from all countries and all times. In no age has a monopoly of spiritual power been granted to any one of our Churches. The "noble army of martyrs"—to take no other illustration—numbers in its ranks Catholic and heretics, men who may have been opposed to each other in life, and some of whom would even have consented to the death of their

comrades in this illustrious host, but all of whom were one in this, that they accepted not deliverance at the cost of conscience, that they might obtain the better resurrection. Slowly but surely the world is coming to understand that the most precious element in martyrdom—that which makes it an example of power and blessing to the world—is one in which all may equally rejoice whether or not they are in accord with the principles for which this great test of all sacrifice is made. The Church is richer and the world is better for every example of loyalty to conscience, even though the conscience itself be misguided. The Protestant believes that the Mores and the Fishers were opposing the highest interests of man in labouring to maintain a cruel despotism, which by some strange folly of human nature had thrust itself into the place of the true ruler of the Church, and exalted itself above all that is known by the name of God, thus seeking to prevent the spread of light, the growth of liberty, and the conversion of man to the liberty that is in Christ. Yet he can rejoice that, believing as they did, they chose to die rather than yield one iota of what to them was a Divine principle. It is the robustness of faith, the triumph of the spiritual over the material, the testimony to the world that man does not live by bread alone, the practical proof that there are those who value the testimony of conscience more than the favour of princes or people, and that death for truth is better than outward splendour when the soul has sealed its own degradation by its infidelity to the truth, that are the points most to be valued in the testimony of the martyrs. And these nobler qualities have been developed in men of all Churches. They have all—though some unconsciously—done noble and enduring service to

the cause of freedom, humanity, and progress, and they have done it from the same motive of love to Christ. Is it to be supposed that common sense will ratify the verdict which would pronounce some of them not Christ's because they did not acknowledge the Divine right of bishops.

VIII.

If there are those who are nobly superior to the logic of facts like these, which might be multiplied if instead of the martyrs we were to look at the apologists, or the missionaries, or the "sweet singers" of the Church, they can be only those whose theory has taken such deep root that they are loftily indifferent to all reasoning and all evidence. The judgment of the age is assuredly against them. With us the danger is that the conclusion should be pressed too far, and that we should be asked not only to recognize the goodness of the individual men, but on it to rest a general inference as to the merits of the system.

There are, indeed, facts which might be adduced that point to a very opposite conclusion, and would almost seem to justify the opinion that the barriers between the Established Church and its neighbours are being made more difficult, and guarded with a more watchful care. The dominant party among the clergy are becoming more contemptuous of Dissenting Churches, more thorough and outspoken in their denunciation of Dissent itself, more desirous to eschew all association with its ministers in distinctively religious work. It is remarkable, too, that this spirit of isolation is found in men whose bearing towards Dissenters is marked by the courtesy of the Christian gentleman. They are not bigots, they are only

consistent, perhaps extreme advocates of an exclusive system. Dissenters may be puzzled to understand how High Churchmen can reconcile their theory either with the broader views of a high intelligence or the generous sympathies of a large heart, and most of all, how they can harmonize their practice with the spirit of the New Testament. But if the exclusive principle is conscientiously accepted, and the believer simply follows out his conviction of the right, it is unjust to reproach him for sectarianism and narrowness. Sectarianism is a matter of temper, not of creed. It is found in association with all creeds, and no individual is to be credited with it simply because of the opinion which he holds. A theory of this kind, indeed, is itself exclusive, and as such is sectarian in its tendencies, and the more so because of its usurpation of the Catholic name. Its necessary result is the isolation of those who maintain it from all who do not conform to its standards, and there are manifestations of its temper which would suggest that the liberalizing influences of the age have been exerted in vain, or that at best they have but softened social antagonism and introduced a more kindly feeling into controversy, but have done nothing towards the abatement of those ecclesiastical and priestly assumptions which render Christian unity impossible.

It might be maintained with some show of plausibility that these High Church views are on the increase, and that they affect a section of Churchmen who are not in sympathy with the principles on which they rest. But exceptional developments of this kind are only what might be expected in an age marked by the intensity of our times. Action and reaction alike are violent, and the very strength of the forces arrayed against the

mediævalism which claims to be Catholicity, and, indeed, against all the pretensions of authority, only rouses in their champions a more resolute spirit of resistance. They are more pronounced in their utterances, more extreme in their demands, more determined in their attitude, because the world has gone away from them. At every point they come into conflict with the spirit of the age, especially as developed in the laity. One of the most serious facts for the Anglican Church to contemplate is this separation between the clergy and the laity, which becomes more decided with every new advance of sacerdotal pretensions. Despite some illusive appearances to the contrary, the age has no love for priests and no tolerance for their assumptions. It is not prepared to concede the postulates on which these far-reaching claims are based, and subjects them to more keen and searching criticism than they have had to meet before. It has little patience with dogmatism and intolerance, especially when they are directly opposed to the teachings of common sense. It has a scorn for pretensions which, as they are not verified by facts, it regards as nothing better than shams. Its scientific spirit wars against a system built upon mere assumptions and unsustained by proofs, and its keen appreciation of results, and of results which are visible, leads it to treat very lightly demands based upon tradition or descent rather than upon actual work for God or man. The struggle against such forces is not hopeful; unless there be an overwhelming power in truth on the opposite side, it is absolutely desperate. It is not those who are cast outside the Christian commonwealth by the "Catholic" theory who have anything to fear, but the Church which adopts it and seeks to grasp its adventitious benefits.

The forces of the age are for liberty and for progress, towards greater unity, and as a consequence, for the wiser economy of Christian power. That they are undermining many a cherished prejudice and disturbing many a traditional arrangement in all our Churches cannot be questioned, and ought not to be regretted. There is more work for them to do in that respect, but their operation need not be feared by those who care more for principles than for methods, who are more desirous to have a system adapted to the life and work of the present than one conformed to the precedents of the past, and who have faith that no change in human plans can weaken the power of that spiritual life which is independent of all systems and in which alone the true strength of the Church is found.

LECTURE II.

RELIGIOUS LIBERALISM IN ITS INFLUENCE ON CHURCH POLITY.

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THE change in the ecclesiastical temper of our country is due principally to the steady growth of the spirit of Liberalism. Liberalism has had to face a strenuous opposition, it has provoked an intense and violent reaction, it has forced the champions of authority to a more extreme assertion of its claims; but it has not only maintained its position, but, despite some appearances to the contrary, has continually increased in strength, and is one of the most powerful factors in the religious life of the day. Perhaps it is unfortunate in its name. In the minds of the unthinking and uninformed, it is sure to be associated with mere political movements, and the mistake is all the more probable, because a belief in liberty and in progress, which is the root-principle of all true Liberalism, may be expected to influence men equally in their civil and ecclesiastical relations, and to produce the same results in both. Ecclesiastical Liberals will generally be political Liberals also. Still, there is a very real distinction between the two sets of opinion. The streams issue from one spring, but they flow in different directions, and at times are very divergent.

It might have been convenient, therefore, if the rivers had been described by distinctive names, but it is too late now to effect the change. The "Liberal" and the "Clerical" are two well-known terms, perhaps better understood on the continent than in this country, but with a sufficiently definite meaning among ourselves. When Cardinal Newman tells us, "The men who had driven me from Oxford were distinctly the Liberals; it was they who had opened the attack upon Tract XC., and it was they who would gain a second benefit if I went on to abandon the Anglican Church,"[1] there is no difficulty in understanding his exact point, whether or not we think his representation perfectly fair. Comparing himself, as he was before his secession to Rome, with Lacordaire, that is, an Anglican Tory with a Roman Catholic Liberal, he says, "We had been both of us inconsistent; he, a Catholic, in calling himself a Liberal; I, a Protestant, in being an anti-Liberal." Protestantism is thus identified with Liberalism, and then all the negations of unbelief are laid upon the head of the principle which has excited revolt against the authority of Rome. It is described as the "anti-dogmatic principle," and we are told that there are "but two alternatives—the way to Rome and the way to atheism. Anglicanism is the half-way house on the one side, and Liberalism is the half-way house on the other."[2]

Liberalism is thus made to cover a very wide range of opinion; for though a certain distinction is recognized between the Evangelical and the Liberal, they are regarded as representing the same tendency, and are

[1] *History of my Religious Opinions*, pp. 203, 204.
[2] Ibid. p. 204.

involved in the same condemnation. Cardinal Newman enumerates no less than eighteen separate theses as constituting that creed of Liberalism which, in common with the High Church generally, he "earnestly denounced and abjured." To several of these, especially in the form in which he presents them, Evangelicals would object, and even those which they adopt they might desire to modify in expression. It is possible that the Evangelical party in the Anglican Church have so far felt the leavening influence of the sacerdotal, or at least of the High Church sentiment, that they would be very apt to introduce ideas which would materially limit the application of the principles they recognize. But the fundamental idea of the whole—that which gives character to the movement—is neither more nor less than the root principle of Protestantism. "There is a right of private judgment; that is, there is no existing authority on earth competent to interfere with the liberty of individuals in reasoning and judging for themselves about the Bible and its contents as they severally please." [1] The results of fidelity to the right of the individual conscience, as thus asserted, may often be extremely inconvenient and unwelcome, but Protestants cannot attempt to set up restrictions and limits of their own without surrendering the *raison d'être* of their system. That the Reformers themselves did not perceive how far their own principle went, and were only too willing to restrain the liberty of which they were the apostles, may be admitted without any depreciation of their character, or of the service which they rendered to humanity. Educated in submission to authority, it was not wonderful that they did not all at once enter into the full exercise of liberty. But it

[1] *History of my Religious Opinions*, p. 295.

was impossible that the rebellion which they headed could be so regulated as to become nothing more than an instrument for the establishment of a new despotism. Every blow which was directed against the tyranny of Rome told against all human authority; every plea for freedom was an argument for the complete emancipation of the soul from all fetters, except those which it voluntarily accepts as an act of homage to that loving Lord in whose service is found the truest liberty.

Our own age has witnessed a more trenchant assertion and more vigorous exercise of the right of free thought, and some of its developments have so alarmed many who think themselves Protestants, but are afraid of their principles, that they would construct breakwaters by which to resist the advancing tide of Rationalism. They would be right and wise if these new defences were works constructed only by reason. But if the element of authority be introduced, Protestantism has been sacrificed. Those who are invested with power may thus restrain others, but at the same time they condemn themselves. Earnest Protestants seeking to repress free inquiry are an inconsistency as monstrous as Gracchus punishing sedition. Others have the same inherent right to freedom as themselves, and for the use of that freedom they are responsible not to man, but to the God by whom it is given.

"Liberty of thought," says Cardinal Newman, "is in itself a good; but it gives an opening to false liberty." There is a pleasant sound in the sentiment, which makes it acceptable and popular. The difficulty arises as soon as it is sought to translate a vague sentiment into plain words. With men generally the "false liberty" is that which leads others into differences of opinion from

themselves. It is only the believers in an infallible Church who can use such language even with a show of consistency. "By Liberalism," Cardinal Newman adds, "I mean false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore is out of place. Among such matters are first principles of whatever kind; and of these the most sacred and momentous are especially to be reckoned the truths of revelation. Liberalism, then, is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it, and claiming to determine on intrinsic grounds the truth and value of propositions which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word." [1]

The occurrence of such remarks in the history of the religious opinions of the writer is a curious phenomenon. In the exercise of his own thought upon the very questions in relation to which he denies the competency of the human intellect to pronounce, and would interdict liberty in others, he has reached certain conclusions, and those who adopt opposite ones have been seduced into "false liberty." The pretension is extraordinary enough when we remember that the writer's present position is due to the distinct assertion for himself of the right of private judgment which he condemns so severely in others. It would be simply ludicrous were it not that Cardinal Newman believes himself to have found an infallible guide by which the wise exercise of his liberty is guaranteed. In the mouth of a Protestant such a pretension could provoke only contempt. It is

[1] *History of my Religious Opinions*, p. 288.

bad enough to claim infallibility for a Church which, at all events, has the hoar of antiquity on its brow, and a sceptre of power in its hands. But a Protestant who advances such a demand claims in reality infallibility for himself. It is true that he may be a member of a society which has accepted the creed he desires to enforce, but even this is the result solely of an act of private judgment on the part of its members. They have agreed upon their own basis of union, and they are perfectly entitled to maintain it as a condition of fellowship in their community, provided they do not identify their society with the Catholic Church, and treat all who are not of it as aliens from Christ. From first to last, however, there is the exercise of free thought upon matters of religion, and to attempt to make any decision final and binding upon all is, in the ultimate issue, to proclaim the infallibility of the individual.

The children of liberty must, in short, accept it with all its drawbacks, and these will not disquiet them so long as they retain their faith in God and in truth. But this does not imply that there are not excesses, perversions, and caricatures of liberty against which it is necessary to guard. Freedom can never confer any right to hinder or check the lawful action of others. A man's liberty is not curtailed because other men constitute a society, even though that society call itself a Christian Church, whose doors are barred against him by the terms of its membership. Nor is there any infraction of the rights of freedom in the enforcement of the terms of a contract on those who have themselves voluntarily entered into it. Religious freedom means nothing more than the right of every man to form his own opinions, and to take all means for propagating them

which do not interfere with the good order of society, without let or hindrance from human authority. It denies the right of toleration; it asserts the equality of all varieties of opinion in the eyes of the law, and it does nothing more. It places the individual conscience outside human jurisdiction, and asserts the grand principle laid down by the apostle, that to his own Master each must stand or fall.

I.

One of the worst results of these advances of liberty is the tendency to a latitudinarianism which does not stop far short of absolute neutrality in relation to all creeds and Churches. Every man is free to think, therefore every man's thoughts are equally true or equally false. Perhaps if the idea were put thus boldly few would endorse so startling a proposition; but there is a great deal of opinion, and still more of sentiment, which practically amounts to this. The first attacks of this spirit are generally made not on doctrine but on polity, and there are numbers who do not perceive that the movement must inevitably extend. In matters of principle, as in all others, unfaithfulness in little things has a strong tendency to develope unfaithfulness in greater things. In guarding, therefore, against laxity in relation to forms of Church government, confessedly subordinate as they are, we are setting up bulwarks which may serve also as defences for the most precious spiritual truths. In truth, the more closely the working of this aggressive Liberalism is studied, the more clearly will the difficulty of separating between the greater and lesser points of Christian life appear. Where there is

a weakening of distinctive belief in relation to the latter, it is generally associated with the undermining of principle on the former also. When men begin to think that it is of no moment to what Church they belong, they are very apt to pass on to a conviction that it is of equally little importance what creed they hold.

This extreme Liberalism, however, is very diversified in its development. Associated with an earnest if not very intelligent spiritualism, it is rashly contemptuous of questions of government. But under other influences it exhibits an equally decided tendency to make light of points of doctrine. There are indeed on all sides some who are more careful about the external vesture of the Church than about its spirit, and whose amazing tolerance of all attacks on the authority of Revelation, or even on the glory of the Divine Redeemer, is in striking contrast with their intense jealousy for some ecclesiastical principle or institution. They would maintain to the last the rights of a National Church, and at the same time would part with every shred of the faith for whose sake alone that Church exists. In other relations they would insist that a Congregational Church ought to guard more carefully against organization which might interfere with its own self-government than to preserve that faith in the risen Saviour without which it is hard to see how or why there should be a Church at all. The phenomenon happily is not a frequent one. It is in striking contradiction to the Lord's teaching that the life is more than the meat, and the body than the raiment. One point is certain, that when men have ceased to care for the life, any interest either in meat or raiment must speedily die out. Should faith in Christ Himself ever perish, men

will speedily cease to trouble themselves as to the government or support of Churches which may continue to bear the name of Christian, in deference to the sensitive feelings of those who in their day may have the same unwillingness as many have now to part with forms from which the spirit has fled, and to abandon names even where the reality is gone. There might even then be some who would interest themselves in the old-world ecclesiastical questions as matters of antiquarian curiosity, just as scientific inquirers now employ themselves in investigating the dead mythologies of the past. But it would be the work only of scholars, with as little practical value or living interest as some disputed reading or doubtful prosody in a Greek play. How could it be otherwise? The faith is dead, why should those who are sufficiently occupied with the work of the world trouble themselves about the laws and practices of a superstition which has become defunct? A discussion about the validity of an apostolical succession in a generation to which the apostles themselves were but the first victims of an illusion which they had helped to propagate and to perpetuate would be simply grotesque.

Not less absurd would be a vigorous and enthusiastic defence of the independency of Churches which themselves were only sad memorials of other days, when Christian communities had a gospel to preach and a work to do, but which had become nothing more than associations of men, who did not profess to have a common faith or a common object, and whose only bond of union was a vague spiritual sympathy. Such societies would, of course, adopt what kind of organization they approved, and there would be no reason why

those outside should concern themselves about their regulations, as there would be no standard of authority to which they could appeal. They would be mere clubs, having no relation to the world at large, and, indeed, no *raison d'être*, except the personal gratification of their members, who would govern them according to their own pleasure. When a so-called Christian Church had renounced the authority of the New Testament and the sovereignty of Christ, it would have left itself without law or ruler, and it would be independent or hierarchical, according to the prevailing opinion of the majority. As a matter of fact, men would soon cease to care whether it was one or the other.

Nothing can be more certain than that the decay of the Christian faith must speedily result in indifference to the claims of rival systems, and ultimately in the collapse of all. So long as a priesthood existed, and was clothed by the State with certain privileges and powers, so long might unbelief feel bound to maintain an attitude of hostility. But that would not imply any preference for a particular Church system; it would be a resistance in the name of liberty and justice to any sacerdotal encroachments upon the rights of conscience, or any countenance on the part of the civil authority of opinions obnoxious to Liberalism—that and nothing more. The conditions of the conflict might cause this antagonism to wear the aspect of agreement with the principles of Independency, inasmuch as unbelief would adopt its protest against authority; but there could be no vital sympathy between this indifference and spiritual principles of any kind. Like all our other Church systems, Congregationalism or Independency is based on the assumption of an antecedent

Christianity. The societies for which it asserts the right of self-government are pre-supposed to be Christian societies. If the Christianity were lost, the Congregationalism would not be worth preserving. The value we attach to a polity must depend entirely on our conception of a Church, and our idea of a Church must be regulated by our view of the authority of Christ. To the unbeliever in Christ it must be a matter of supreme indifference what form of government the societies of his followers may adopt, except so far as any of them may cross his individual liberty. Let the world become unbelieving, and the discussion about Episcopacy and Presbyterianism, between State Churches and Free Churches, will before long be relegated to oblivion. It matters little, therefore, as to the ultimate result whether Liberalism seek first to undermine the doctrine or the polity, since there is so intimate an association between the two that carelessness about the one is pretty sure to be followed in the long run by indifference to the other.

II.

As might be anticipated, this Liberalism seeks to minimize all points of difference. It is not only latitudinarian but optimist. Especially is this the result where there is an Erastianism intent on preserving a National Church at all costs. There is, indeed, a great deal that sounds extremely liberal, which is nothing but pure Erastianism, so intent on the one thing which it has undertaken to do that it will manifest the most extreme tolerance in relation to all differences of opinion, if by this it can avert so terrible a calamity as the emancipation of religion from the control of the State.

The clergyman may ignore or even contradict the creeds and articles which he has professed and is solemnly bound to teach. Protestantism may be in his eyes a rebellion against God, or a noble assertion of the fallibility of all Churches, the incertitude and vanity of all creeds, and the independence of conscience of all authority. He may sigh over the destruction which the Reformation wrought, or insist that its work was imperfect, and that our duty now is to advance along its lines to an extreme rationalism. He may be a sacerdotalist or a latitudinarian, if not an agnostic. He may idolize the sacrament, or he may refuse Divine worship to the Saviour. In principle he may be Ultramontane, Puritan, or sceptic, but, provided he will wear the Anglican vestment and conform to the Anglican "use," he may have his place in the National Church. The maintenance of a public religion is of far more importance than the interests of any particular system of doctrine or even the rights of the individual conscience. Indeed, the appeal to conscience on such a matter is only an indication of excessive and irrational purism, a piece of ethical pedantry worthy of doctrinaires and fanatics, but despised by practical men. Strange to say, this spirit is sometimes found where there are very definite convictions on points which are generally esteemed of paramount importance, but which are placed in subordination to the one dominant idea of a State Church. We have thus the extraordinary spectacle of men whose own theology is of an advanced type, and strikes at the authority of the Church and the priest, appearing as the champions of a party whose triumph would mean the overthrow of intellectual freedom and the restoration of mediæval superstition. Better they

should be allowed to use the prestige of the Establishment for the promotion of a system which aims at the destruction of all that their defenders most prize than afford a triumph to the men who would have conscience unfettered and trust to the power of truth and to the grace of God, from whom all truth comes, to assert its supremacy. Erastianism practically teaches that there is no truth so pure or so precious that it is worth while to sacrifice the advantages of a national religion for its maintenance; and in doing so, it adopts the arguments and uses the language of Liberalism, though its success would be fatal to true liberty.

Devoted friends of the Anglican Establishment, who are at the same time alive to the peril by which it is menaced from the explosive forces within its own bosom, are continually indulging in pleasant utterances, which are intended to prove to the world that their differences mean very little. They seem unable to understand the impression which this mode of speaking produces on those who know the facts, and have no motive for regarding them in *couleur de rose*. There is hardly a Church Congress at which some of the speakers are not intent on convincing the various parties or "schools of thought," as they are euphemistically described, that they are essentially one. But every one outside understands that when the Congress is over and the clergy go down to their own parishes, they will carry out the views of their respective parties in utter forgetfulness of this interchanging of friendly professions. Church Association and Church Union will still keep up their bitter strife, and their advocates will encounter each other in the courts of law, as keener adversaries even than those recalcitrant Dissenters who make no such professions,

and yet maintain a more real unity. The result is disastrous not so much to the Anglican Church as to religion itself.

The opening address of the Bishop of Peterborough at the Leicester Congress affords one of the latest and not the least striking illustration of this kind. His observations are pitched in the tone, at once catholic and practical, which is peculiarly fitted to catch the public ear and secure popular sympathy.

> This desire to be practical will account for the omission from our list of subjects of some of what are called the "burning Church questions" of our time. If these do not appear in our programme it is not because we were afraid of them, but simply because they were crowded out by subjects which seemed to us at once more important and more practical. For burning questions are not always important ones—sometimes they are even pitifully small and unimportant. And besides, they have for the most part, I think, a happy way of burning themselves out if you let them alone. Are we not walking now, coolly and comfortably enough, over the ashes of more than one once burning, and now burnt out, question? No! The really great, urgent, and burning questions of the day are far other and weightier than these. While we have been disputing about details of ceremony and modes of worship the world around us has been discussing whether there is any use or meaning whatever in our worship or in the faith that it expresses. It was a burning question once whether the minister should deliver his Master's message clad in a black dress or in a white one; and while that dispute was being waged, the question was smouldering all around us whether he had any message whatever to deliver. It is, or it lately was, a burning question at which side of the holy table the clergyman should stand to minister the sacrament of his Lord's love; but it was and is a burning question with thousands who have never witnessed nor cared to witness either position, whether the Lord of the sacrament were an impostor or a fanatic. It is a burning question what is the precise mode of that Lord's supernatural presence in the Eucharist. Alas! has it not ceased to be a question with multitudes whether there be any supernatural at all? Yes, the one great Church question of our time, the burning question before which all others fade into insignificance, is this: Round about church and chapel, impartially indifferent or impartially hostile to both, lie the masses of our great town popula-

tions, lie scattered units in our country parishes, for whom life has no higher, no better meaning than that of a daily struggle for the means of a joyless existence, uncheered by the hope of a happier hereafter, undignified by the consciousness of Divine descent and the heirship of immortality.

There is so much of right feeling and good sense in this that it seems at first sight hard to object to it. Yet if the "practical spirit" by which it is inspired had been allowed fuller and freer play, it might have suggested that vital differences are never removed by being treated as thus insignificant, and still further that those outside, who assume that all theological questions are mere hair-splittings, about which there is a very absurd amount of excitement, are only confirmed in their contempt by this mode of dealing with differences which have been regarded as vital. For these questions which the bishop now treats so lightly have been hotly and eagerly discussed in pulpits, on platforms, in courts of law. They have been treated as questions of life and death. They have separated bishops, clergy, and members of the same Church from each other and arrayed them in hostile camps. They have formed topics for parliamentary discussion and for popular agitation. They involve points of conscience for the sake of which clergymen have gone to prison. Why there should be this sudden change of feeling in relation to them cannot be very obvious to uninterested observers, and it is not very wonderful if they leap to the conclusion that religious people are the unhappy victims of a mental eccentricity and are liable to occasional outbursts of frenzy which are very threatening while they last, but which soon pass over and are then admitted by themselves to have been extremely unreasonable. It is not to be expected that these critics will limit their view to any particular class

of theological questions. They will include all points of ritual, polity, and even doctrine in one category, and relegate them to the region of the unknowable and unpractical.

The result, therefore, of this convenient mode of evading difficulties may be the increase of the very evils which the bishop, in common with Christian men everywhere, so earnestly deplores. But his representation of the facts is so onesided as to be extremely unfair to the conscientious men who took part in these controversies, some of whom were lacking neither in piety nor ability, and were just as competent to take a just view of the relative importance of the points at issue as any prelate on the bench. It is, *primâ facie*, incredible that leaders of thought, fully alive to the responsibility of the action they were taking, would have convulsed their Church about matters so insignificant as the colour of a robe or the posture of a minister. Great struggles are often waged about what seems to be a trifle light as air, and the conduct of the respective combatants appears nothing less than ludicrous until it is understood that the battle is really for some great principle, of which the trifle is representative. A conflict in a court about some precedent, a struggle for some Dulcigno which appears hardly worth the capture, the passionate devotion to a flag which excludes the aspirant from a throne, may all be made to look very ridiculous. But, in truth, it is the ridicule which is so shallow and absurd, since it contents itself with a view so superficial as to be wholly fallacious.

In the case before us, the bishop might argue that even the point really at issue was not of the importance ascribed to it, and that all parties would have been much better occupied in seeking to recover the lapsed masses

to Christianity than in this internecine strife between different forms of Christianity itself. But the answer to this reasoning is obvious. These "burning questions" touch so closely the essence of the gospel itself that until they be settled it is impossible to know in what character the messenger is to address the people, or what message he has to deliver. For the people and for the reception they are likely to accord him it is of the last importance to determine whether he addresses them as a priest clothed with the authority of a Church, and speaking as representative of it and of God, or as a man of like passions and infirmities with themselves, whose only claim to be heard is that he is speaking that word of God which is the light and joy of his own soul. If he endeavours to inspire in them that faith in the supernatural which to many of them is at present the wildest of illusions, they will certainly demand to know whether the faith which he requires means a belief in a miraculous power as attending the consecrating prayer of the priest, or is nothing more than the confidence given to a man who appeals to the heart and conscience as witnesses that he is an ambassador of Christ. It is easy to say that these opposing schools, and indeed all the "schools of thought" in the Establishment, hold the essence of Christianity; but this optimist view sacrifices truth to charity. The "essence" of the gospel may be so corrupted by superstition as to lose its purity; it may be so diluted by philosophy as to be robbed of its strength. One or other of these modes of tampering with the truth is imputed by the rival schools to each other. The Evangelical holds that the Anglican has made the commandment of God of none effect by his traditions; the "Catholic" in his

turn retorts that even the light which is in the Evangelical system has become darkness through its rejection of the guidance of the Church and the hierarchy. No doubt there are certain elementary principles which they hold in common; but even these are so far affected by the doctrine with which in each case they are associated that the likeness hardly extends below the surface.

One of the most able and candid defenders of the Establishment, whose Erastianism, intense as it is, has not so utterly blinded his perception of facts as to induce him to acquiesce in this irrational optimism, admits that these schools of thought are "so different that, did they not accept and delight in the use of the same liturgy—though interpreted, we must admit, in the most opposite sense—we should hardly know what they had in common beyond the belief in God and the example of Christ."[1] It is far better manfully to face the truth thus than to try and wrap it up in honeyed compliments or in vague generalities which deceive no one, but which do unfortunately confirm the impression already only too prevalent, that there is no reality about the most earnest theological controversies.

But there is a still more egregious fallacy into which the bishop has been betrayed. "Burning questions do not burn themselves out." They may take new forms, they may present themselves to different ages, or even to different parties in the same age in different aspects, but they do not therefore become extinct volcanoes. The question of robes or rites may assume a great variety of forms, but the question of the priesthood remains the same. Some years ago it was a controversy about preaching in the surplice; to-day, it is a discussion

[1] *The Spectator* on the Primate's charge, p. 1115. (1880.)

about the use of sacerdotal vestments in the celebration of the Communion. To say that the first question has burnt itself out is a fallacy, or worse than a fallacy. It remains the same as ever. The men who fancy that they have settled it by treating the question of the gown to be used in the pulpit as of no importance, are deceiving themselves and misleading others. They have evaded the difficulty, but they have not grappled with it. It is as vital and as pressing as ever. The "burning question" is, "Have we a human priesthood?" Twenty years ago it took the form of, "Shall the clergy preach in a surplice?" To-day it is, "Shall they sacrifice at the altar in a chasuble?" The meaning is precisely the same. Evangelicals have gained nothing by concessions, but they have practically given up the whole controversy. The question raised in past ages presses for solution still. The Bishop of Peterborough is mistaken if he is able to persuade himself into the belief that it has burned itself out.

III.

Liberalism boasts of being pre-eminently practical, and despises all scientific treatment of questions relating to doctrine or Church life.

When ecclesiastical leaders, who may reasonably be supposed to have a deep interest in the principles about which these controversies are waged, and who must be assumed to have an extensive knowledge of the systems based upon them, treat the struggle thus lightly, it is not wonderful that the practical men, as they regard themselves, should accept the view of the scientists, and should press it to an extreme. Everywhere this class

strives to assert itself, greatly to the hindrance of the search for truth, and to the vexation of those who are earnestly engaged in it. Professor Huxley, in a recent address at the opening of the new Science College at Birmingham, described with characteristic force the attitude which men of this type have taken in relation to physical science.

> The practical men believed that the idol whom they worship—Rule of Thumb—had been the source of the past prosperity, and will suffice for the future welfare of the arts and manufactures. They were of opinion that science is speculative rubbish; that theory and practice have nothing to do with one another; and that the scientific habit of mind is an impediment rather than an aid in the conduct of ordinary affairs. I use the past tense in speaking of the practical men; for, although they were very formidable thirty years ago, I am not sure that the pure species has not been extirpated. In fact, so far as mere argument goes, they have been subjected to such a *feu d'enfer* that it is a miracle if any have escaped.

Would that it were possible to speak as confidently of the decay of this party in the ecclesiastical as in the scientific world. As descriptive of their views and tendencies, Mr. Huxley's language is exactly true. *Mutatis mutandis*, it might be applied to all ecclesiastical questions. Numbers are of opinion that theology, with its creeds and dogmas, is speculative rubbish; that doctrine and practice, creed and conduct have nothing to do with one another; that the theological habit of mind is an impediment rather than an aid in the religion of daily life. It is to be hoped that one whose eagle eye detects so clearly the folly of such views in relation to his own department of inquiry will not allow himself to sanction a similar error in relation to a field of thought and knowledge he has not cultivated.

The "practical men" hold very cheap all differences

about creed or polity. Religion, they urge, is not a theory, nor a sentiment, nor a profession, but a life. Doctrines and Churches are not themselves an end, but simply the means to an end, and that end conduct. If that end be reached, what is the advantage of wrangling as to the process by which it has been secured? If "men do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God," what need is there to consider whether they hold the orthodox creed or belong to the true Church? They have already attained the goal to which even the most perfect system professes to conduct them, and why should we disturb ourselves or trouble them as to the dogmas which they hold? If there is error in their creed, at least they have largely escaped its corrupting and injurious influence; and, in truth, if such men be wrong, better to stray with them than to walk in the straight path with many whose orthodoxy is beyond suspicion. They are good men, and that is all that we can desire them to be.

In reply to this very summary method of dealing with one of the most difficult and delicate of problems, it might be said that human character is not the perfectly simple thing which it is thus assumed to be. In every one there mingle elements of good and evil. Even those who come nearest to perfect excellence have some qualities in excess, while in others they are defective; and the question would still remain for all who are not prepared to dismiss all attempts to connect a man's moral qualities with his belief, as "scientific rubbish," how far these faults may be traced to his creed or to his Church. To assume that between the speculative and the practical there can be no relation is a mere *petitio principii*, and one which is contradicted by an

overwhelming array of facts. But that is precisely what is continually done, and hence the easy conclusion that doctrine and practice are independent of each other, and that if we can shape the conduct right, it matters not what becomes of the doctrine.

The fallacy here arises out of the one-sided view which is given. The truth is not the whole truth. It is not ours to try and reconcile what we deem gross inconsistencies between a man's creed and his practice, when the latter seems to be broader and purer than the former. There may be intellectual prejudices or idiosyncrasies which lead him to cling to opinions which really form no part of himself. Or he may be under the unconscious influence of ideas which he has renounced, but which had been so far assimilated with his whole thought and feeling, and had become so thoroughly part of his intellectual being, that it was impossible for him to divest himself wholly of their effect. Or there may be in him some logical defect which prevents him from seeing and accepting the full consequences of the principles he has adopted. Or, what is still more common, the man may have a simplicity and purity of heart, and a generosity of temper, which may preserve him from the warping influences of his creed. Whatever the reason, there are numbers of men who are better than their creeds; and when we find such cases, it certainly is not for us to try and fasten on the individuals views which they repudiate, or to attribute to them motives or acts which to us would seem natural and almost necessary could we accept their principles. Happily the judgment for which we, in our ignorance of the mysterious workings of the human spirit, are incompetent does not lie with us. It is for us to honour all goodness wherever it is; to

give men credit for what they are irrespective of their opinions, and even, though we may sometimes wonder how with such opinions they can be what they are, to rejoice in the evidence they furnish of a law written in their hearts more authoritative and more enduring than the errors by which they may have been misled.

It becomes a very different matter when a principle which we properly apply in our estimate of personal character is pressed into a rule for the judgment of Christian doctrines and Church systems. It is impossible, however, to ignore the strength of this tendency; and when it is applied even to the most vital points in the Christian faith, it is only to be expected that it should tell still more powerfully upon all questions of mere government. When it is boldly maintained that a man of pure life and spiritual sympathy should not be denied Christian fellowship, although he may repudiate everything distinctive of Christianity, and laugh to scorn the thought that the Lord Jesus can be his Prince and Saviour, it would be absurd to attach any importance to his views on the authority of bishops, the validity of the apostolical succession, or the rights of individual Christians or Churches.

But it would be a grievous mistake to suppose that the desire to be practical, which makes so light of the differences between rival systems, is always found in association with scepticism or indifference. It is not unfrequently the manifestation of an entirely different spirit—a spirit so earnest in its devotion to the spiritual interests of Christ's kingdom, so keenly alive to the perils which threaten the gospel itself, so far elevated above all sectarian sentiment, while at the same time so fervid in Christian zeal, that it has little patience with

the controversies in which are frittered away energy and talent needed for much higher purposes. Its philosophy may not be very profound, nor its policy very sagacious; even in its sentiment, which looks so beautiful in its catholicity, there may be an alloy of less exalted feeling, but there is here a feeling which has spread widely among laymen, and which materially affects their views of all sectarian movements. It is a recoil from the narrow exclusiveness which once was so rampant, and which still has so evil an influence upon the social relations of ecclesiastical parties. It is an emphatic protest not only against the condemnation of men because of the evil there may be in the systems, but also against the idea that the Church of Christ can be confined within the limits of any one of our Churches, or even of them all united.

The feeling is the result partly of the scientific temper of which the age is so proud, and which is carried even into ecclesiastical questions. The extreme assumptions on which theologians are too often accustomed to build their arguments are no longer granted, nor are the hasty processes by which they reach conclusions in harmony with their own preconceptions allowed to pass unchallenged. Solitary texts of doubtful interpretation are no longer accepted as decisive of some grave question of authority. The New Testament is exmained as a whole, and on points of government the history of the Church is studied with the view of obtaining clearer light. The result is, in the case of numbers, a conviction that in matters of constitution there was meant to be great liberty, and that the Church which claims to be the only Catholic and Apostolic Church because of its Episcopal orders is that which is really most opposed to the

true spirit of the gospel, and has done most towards forfeiting its claim to catholicity altogether.

This view may easily be pushed to an unwarrantable and, in some of its aspects, even dangerous extreme; but it has a good side. In so far as it serves to break down the barriers which ecclesiastical tradition, or individual bigotry or social custom, has set up between different Churches, it is effecting a great and necessary reform. When it leads men to see in all those who not only "profess to call themselves Christians," but prove that their profession is a reality by their efforts to do the will of Christ, members of the one Catholic Church who seek to develope their various schemes of Church polity in obedience to their individual conception of Christ's purpose, it is only helping men to recover the lost ideal of Christian unity as distinct from uniformity. In the honour which it renders to the conscientious maintenance of principle, apart from any judgment upon the principle to which this loyalty is shown, it is encouraging a temper which Christian charity should always foster, but which in the fierceness of controversy is apt to be trampled out. But if it goes beyond this, and teaches that questions of polity are of so little moment that a man need not feel himself bound either by the teaching of Scripture, or the lessons of history in relation to them, and that in fact there is no point of right or wrong, truth or error, involved in the controversy, it is making charity or liberty a cloak for a latitudinarianism which has in it the germ of serious evils.

It would be strange, to say the least, if there were no principles in the New Testament to guide us in the constitution and government of Christian Churches; and if they are there, it would be still stranger if individuals were at liberty to treat them as of no significance. There

is such a thing as the proportion of faith, and principles of polity may not have the same relative importance as the verities of Christian doctrine. But they are not to be lightly taken up or cast aside in obedience to caprice, or fashion, or personal interest, as though the authority of Christ was not supreme, or at all events, not absolute in such matters. Of course, if a man is not convinced that the great Head of the Church has left any directions on these points, in his case the question does not arise. He believes that there is perfect liberty, and "to the Lord" he uses this liberty. Even he, if faithful to his professions, must be a resolute opponent of all attempts to establish the rule of a hierarchy, which can have no foundation for its exclusive claims unless it be able to plead the right of a Divine institution. Nor can his neutrality between the rival systems be pleaded as an example by those who defend the main outlines of Church government in the New Testament, and who in treating them as mere accidents are ignoring what they confess to be of supreme authority. But for himself he is taking a course which, however mistaken and even irrational we may deem it, is in harmony with his interpretations of Scripture, and in obedience to Christ's law as interpreted by his own conscience.

IV.

Another danger of our religious Liberalism arises from the tendency to transfer our judgments of individuals to the system with which they are identified. It is idle to try to perpetuate the injustice of condemning men because of their Church associations, but the reaction is so extreme as to demand that we approve of the Church

because of the noble men to be found in its fellowship. The teacher or the priest is a good man, therefore the Church to which he is attached cannot be bad. The Liberalism which judges character with equity and generosity thus tends to obliterate all distinctions between different Churches, and to foster the belief that no Church system can be bad so long as good men adhere to it. When with this is combined the influence of a strong hero-worship, which is characteristic of the age, the result cannot be viewed without some anxiety.

One remarkable case of this kind stands out conspicuously in our own time. It is not easy to measure the amount of power and prestige which the Romish Church has derived from the accession of John Henry Newman, and that, not so much from the force of his reasoning, keen and subtle as that is, nor from the great authority which he commanded among his co-religionists, and especially his friends at Oxford, but from the weight of character in the man himself, increased as that was by the self-sacrifice which was necessitated by his conversion. The respect felt for the genius, the conscientiousness, the self-devotion of the distinguished Oratorian has been by numbers half unconsciously transferred to the system; and in the brief period of a lifetime he has done more to raise the status of the Church of Rome in this country than had been accomplished by all the work of two centuries.

It would be anticipating subjects that must be dealt with hereafter were I to diverge here to estimate the exact progress which the Church of Rome has made during the last thirty years. Nor is it necessary, because it is not to the increase of its actual strength, which is much less than some alarmists would have us believe,

that reference is made, but to the change of tone in relation to the Romish Church. It is no longer regarded as the portentous monster which it appeared to Protestants of the last generation. Even where there is no abatement of the feeling against its perversions of Christianity, there is a readiness to discuss its principles, instead of treating it as a grotesque superstition, which lay beyond the region of rational debate. There may be no more sympathy, but there is a patient tolerance which was certainly not manifested thirty years ago. Canon Oakley explains the ignoring of Roman Catholics by the early Tractarians as the result of sheer ignorance.

> It must (he says) be very difficult for those who are sons of the Church, not by adoption, but by inheritance, to realize, even by a strong effort of the imagination, the depth and extent of the ignorance which prevailed among members of the Anglican Establishment at the beginning of the Tractarian movement with regard to the state and feelings of the Catholic community in England. It is no exaggeration to say that many of us knew far more about the manners and customs of the ancient Egyptians or Scythian tribes than of the characters and doings of this portion of our fellow countrymen.

This was, no doubt, due partly to the autocratic isolation which the members of the Anglican Establishment have cultivated, but it was intensified in the case of the Roman Catholics by the strong anti-Papal sentiment which prevailed. There is certainly no such ignorance to-day. The Roman Catholic Church is receiving now that amount of attention and even deference which is seldom denied in this country to a system round which any odour of aristocracy or antiquity gathers. It is recognized as an old Church, as a Church to which high-born families are attached, as a Church which has a certain following, though possibly a small one, in "Society." The

"little modest presbyteries" of which Canon Oakley spoke have been exchanged for imposing churches and even cathedrals, and the change in its social status has corresponded with this improvement in its outward fortunes.

John Henry Newman has been the chief cause of this revolution. The secession of members of aristocratic families did much to compel attention, and of that secession Dr. Newman was the principal agent. But he has done much more than this. He is recognized by those who most widely differ from him as possessing one of the keenest intellects and purest souls of his generation. England is proud of the man, believes in his ability, and believes in his sincerity. As a natural consequence there is a disposition to look at the Church which he has adopted, and in adopting which he must have sacrificed so much, with more consideration. The result of the more careful thought thus given to its claims may not be, in many cases certainly will not be, an acceptance of them. But at the outset the Romish Church secures a hearing which otherwise would not be accorded to it. Further examination may show that the great leader of this Romish reaction has proclivities which may explain his movement, but his adhesion to the Vatican certainly creates the impression that its doctrines cannot be a bundle of absurdities and idolatries, and that Romish priests are not necessarily the deceivers which heated partisans have represented.

If the reaction stops here it is not to be regarded with disapproval or regret. There can be no objection to this more rational and satisfactory mode of entering into the Romish controversy. Those who believe in the principles of Protestantism would not wish it otherwise. They do

not desire to retain any advantage which is derived from mere blind prejudice They do not fear any conflict of argument; and if Romanism appears to have gained undue advantage from the personal influence which has cleared away some of the odium that once rested upon it, they can see that is only a compensation for the injustice with which it had long been treated. What is to be guarded against now is that the fair judgment on the system itself is not disturbed and affected by the consideration shown to a distinguished convert.

There would be no danger at all were sufficient care always taken to discriminate between men and systems, and not to allow our feelings towards the one to colour our judgment of the other. But so strong is the tendency to confusion on the point, that even the liberal Dean of Westminster, who, of all men, might be expected to be free from such a mistake, showed that even he had been carried away by it, when, in this very case of Cardinal Newman, he reproached Nonconformists for their sympathy with him, as though it implied some leaning towards his High Church theories.

> Not Arnold, not Whately, not Milman, not Frederick Robertson, not Cecil, nor Venn, nor Simeon, but John Henry Newman, the chief of that retrogade and exclusive movement, though filled, as he himself describes, with "fierce thoughts" against the liberal tendencies of the age, is hailed by them as the English Churchman to whom they look with the greatest admiration.[1]

No suggestion could be more contrary to all probability as well as to all the facts of the case. In the Nonconformist view, indeed, there was but little difference between the principles of which Dr. Newman had been the most eloquent exponent within the Established

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 137, p. 206. (1873.)

Church, and those for the sake of which he went into voluntary exile from a Church whose highest honours were within his reach, and patiently submitted to the dreary years of neglect which awaited him in the Church which long seemed unable to understand the full value of the success it had achieved. To Protestants of the Puritan type, it was far from being clear that the cause either of Protestantism or freedom really suffered from the new and more logical position which its most subtle and eloquent assailant had assumed. Authority is the foe which they feel constrained to oppose, and it is to them of little practical importance whether its representatives wear the livery of Canterbury or of Rome, own the rule of Lambeth or the Vatican. High Churchism is to them simply disguised Romanism, or, to put it more correctly, the spirit of Romanism without its distinctive form ; and it was, to say the least, open to doubt whether the cause of Christian liberty might not have suffered more from John Henry Newman, as a leader of thought at Oxford, or a dignitary of the Anglican Church, with all its prestige behind him, than from the head of the Oratory, or even from the Cardinal as the world now knows him. The Church of Rome has gained more to external appearance from the latter, but it is doubtful whether Protestantism has suffered so much.

But even this consideration did not determine the sympathy of Nonconformists. Apart from the results altogether, and without trying to balance the loss and gain to the cause of Romanism, they felt that the man was entitled to honour. Fully sensible of the extraordinary fascination which he exercises over numbers of minds, and mourning that his great ability should be employed to rehabilitate the power of an old super-

stition, they could still perceive that the cause to which he was most opposed, and in which they are as deeply interested—true Liberalism in religion—was served by the signal illustration he gave of the supremacy of conscience, in the very act in which he renounced its independence and placed it henceforth under the control of human authority. They could even thank God for the grace which enabled a man, with infirmities like their own, who saw the leadings of Divine guidance on the one hand, but, on the other, felt the restraints of early association and strong affection, which with him were infinitely stronger than promptings of ambition, powerful as these may have been, to obey God rather than man, and to go out from the home of his early days, not knowing whither he went. They felt that truth gained infinitely more by his loyalty to conscience than it lost by the transfer even of his great force to the side of reaction.

It is one of the misfortunes of the time that even Dean Stanley should not be able to recognize this, and should attribute to mere intellectual agreement on a subordinate point what was really due to a sympathy with moral heroism. "They (Nonconformists) are, of course," he says, "not insensible to the charms of genius, learning, and zeal which he shares with the other leaders of religious thought whom we have enumerated, but the distinction which at this time specially commends him to their notice is obviously his antipathy to Erastianism, and his separation from the Establishment."

The unfairness shown in this representation to Dissenters is a very secondary matter. Those who know their fidelity to Protestantism will not readily believe that even their hatred to Erastianism would induce them

to lend any help, direct or indirect, to a system which would redress the evil done by Erastianism by creating another even more mischievous in its result. They refuse to bow to the jurisdiction of Cæsar, but they are not prepared to substitute for it the tyranny of the priest. But as Dr. Newman believed that priestly rule to be Divine, they honour him for being faithful to his convictions, instead of endeavouring to square his convictions either with the gratification of personal ambition or the maintenance of a favourite institution. What is to be regretted is the inability to recognize this, for the natural result of it is to give the Church of which Cardinal Newman is now a distinguished ornament all the moral prestige which accrues from the impression created by his nobility of character. Dean Stanley intended to make a point against the Dissenters. What he has actually done is to give the Church of Rome a fresh advantage by the suggestion that the honour rendered to the cardinal is really an expression of sympathy with the Church to which he has yielded the homage of his soul.

The mistake is all the more unfortunate, because it so entirely coincides with the feeling which must be engendered in so many minds by the position which Cardinal Newman occupies. It is a disturbance of their old notions to see a prince of the Holy Roman Church treated with the respect accorded to him. They reason, and not unnaturally, that the character of Rome must be very different from all they have hitherto conceived, if even Protestant Dissenters can regard with admiration a man who has deserted the Anglican Church, in order that he may become a leader in the great work of recovering England to the faith, in opposition to which she has done such deeds of heroism, and nursed so noble

an army of martyrs. Dissenters answer that they hate the principles, but still believe that it is infinitely better that those who hold them should profess them than remain in the fellowship of a Church whose allegiance they have in their secret heart renounced. If this account of their feelings is not to be received, and the world is to be taught that it implies some approval of the new principles, then the effect is produced which is so much to be deprecated. Men begin to believe that the differences between opposing Churches were greatly magnified by the passions or prejudices of former generations, that the world has grown wiser, and that to-day men will dwell in unity and peace, confessing that even between Romanism and Protestantism the antagonism cannot be regarded as vital, for even between the extreme men on both sides there is strong spiritual sympathy, and that it is of no importance in which army men enrol themselves, provided they are faithful to their convictions and professions.

Nor is it on the side of the Romanist only that this conclusion will be drawn. The honour which is paid to a man who has broken with all the associations of his family, all the sacred influences of his Church, and all the best traditions of his country, because his conscience teaches him to submit to the authority of the Church, cannot and ought not to be denied to another who has made the same sacrifices, because his thinkings have led in precisely the opposite direction. In both cases conscience is supreme, though it prompts one to a servile submission to authority, and inspires the other to a daring revolt against the rule of faith. Those who maintain the rights of conscience must honour both equally. But this does not imply that they are in sympathy

with opinions which are in such rooted opposition to each other. All that it means is simply that they respect the integrity and high-mindedness common to both. There is no example of loyalty to conscience so conspicuous on the side of free thought as that of Cardinal Newman on the opposite side. But instances there are in which the sacrifice is quite as real, and in some senses even more painful, though to the world it may not seem so costly. Unbelievers who thus cut themselves adrift from all their old moorings have no such helps and consolations as await those who only forsake one Church in order to find in the communion of another that infallible guidance and perfect calm for which they have been sighing. The one class are launching out on a stormy sea, having cast away their compass and their chart, and refused to accept the guidance of any pilot. The others are steering their bark out of turbid and troubled waters into the quiet haven which the Church has prepared for them.

The consolations which await the Romanists may seem to us very visionary; but to them nothing could be more real or more strengthening. The sceptic, on the other hand, can, from the very nature of the case, have none of the consolations which faith supplies. It is idle to speak to him of a present Saviour or an approving Father when God and Christ have become to him but mere names, and in the spiritual firmament is neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, but one black canopy of darkness.

Sad and cheerless indeed is the path of an unbeliever who has openly renounced the communion of the Church because he has ceased to believe in Christ as Prince and Saviour. He has left behind every trust on which his spirit may once have been stayed, and in the weakness

or sorrow, the conflict and the trouble, which may be before him has no rock that is higher than himself under which he can find refuge. Darkness is around him, and every step he takes only leads him into a thicker gloom and more complete desolation. The world has but scant mercy on those who have rebelled against its conventional ideas, and turned aside from the societies which fashion approves; and, unfortunately, earnest Christians too often show themselves lacking in high-minded liberality in their treatment of the unbeliever. He has thus to face all the unpopularity which sturdy independence like his is sure to provoke. Were he a convert to Rome he could flatter himself with the thought that his Church, which even here enjoys a prestige accorded to no other community of Dissenters, holds a position in Christendom which enables it to look down with scorn on the childish pretensions of Anglicanism. But the unbeliever goes out into loneliness, perhaps to poverty, without the immortal hopes which strengthen the heart for the endurance of present suffering and loss. There is surely something heroic which those whose devotion to the gospel is most passionate can still discern, and discerning can admire, in the power of principle and conscience which can nerve a man for such conflict. He denies all that they most firmly believe, he tramples on what they hold in deepest reverence; but he asserts one principle in which they are in perfect accord, that the first of all considerations for every man is that he should be true. Can they who believe in a religion which asks no service, and accepts none, except that of those who yield it the sacrifice of their spirit and their understanding, fail to appreciate the courage of him who openly refuses this service

because he is not persuaded in his own mind, instead of rendering the homage of a Judas, and calling Him "Master" whom he betrays with a kiss?

Honour should be rendered to loyalty to conscience everywhere. But it is one thing to respect a man's conscience, another and a very different thing to suggest that his errors cannot be serious since they have not impaired his fidelity to his own sense of right. Perhaps an extreme example of this kind may do something to prevent the abuse of a sentiment which is not only to be admired but to be imitated. There are few who would go so far as to maintain that a belief in God is not a point of cardinal importance, because there are atheists who command respect by the general nobility of their spirit, and especially by their fidelity to their own convictions. But if the theory that all systems are equally good, provided they are accepted with equal honesty, cannot be carried out in all cases, there is no reason why it should be introduced in any, and we are forced back on the very simple but natural method of judging all systems on their own merits. The fruits they produce must form one important element in the adjudication of their claims, but in estimating them we must look to a wider induction of facts than is furnished by the study of a few individual characters. Having fully recognized the idea that absolute and unadulterated truth is not to be found in any Church polity, and that a monopoly of holiness is not enjoyed by any Church, it still remains to be inquired which system most accords with the spirit of the gospel, has been most successful in developing the essential features of Christianity, and is best adapted to the great work for which all Churches exist—the estab-

lishment of the kingdom of God among men. Though the New Testament may not have marked out a pattern of Church government as elaborate and minute as the pattern of the tabernacle given to Moses, there are great principles for the government of Christian life which apply pre-eminently to the constitution and management of Christian societies. These cannot be violated without a departure from the path of duty and a consequent loss of power; and if these departures proceed so far as to involve an invasion of personal right, and a consequent weakening of the spiritual force of the Church, they must be resisted at whatever cost of present ease and external agreement. The questions may not be of such a kind as to affect the salvation of individuals, but if they tell upon the aggressive power of the Church, and its efficiency for the work it has to do in the world, they are not to be lightly dismissed as of no importance.

V.

This leads to another of the errors which Liberalism continually commits. It is unable to appreciate the real importance of the struggles between rival systems. It regards only their superficial aspects, and fails to perceive how deep their roots strike. Questions of Church government may often involve not only theological doctrines, precious to men who, while concerned about evangelical truth, avow their indifference to points of mere ecclesiastical organization, but also rights and liberties in which those who despise creeds and Churches are deeply interested.

To place mere questions of polity on a level with the vital doctrines of the gospel would be a mistake; but it

is very difficult to distinguish so completely between them as to say that our great ecclesiastical controversies turn entirely upon questions of government. Take the fundamental point of all—the proper qualification for membership in a Christian Church. Shall we, adopting the principle *cujus regio ejus religio*, assert that when the State adopts and establishes Christianity, every one of its citizens is, in virtue of his citizenship, a member of the Church of Christ? Or, accepting the theory of the Catholic Church, shall we say that the Church is composed of those who have by baptism been made children of God, heirs of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven? Or shall we, following the instructions of our Congregational forefathers (sometimes too apt to be diluted in our days), insist that there must be a spiritual qualification, and that the Church consists of those only who have been gathered out of the world and by living faith are united to Christ Himself? Our whole idea of Church government depends upon the view we take of this foundation principle, and it is only necessary to examine it to see how intimately that is connected with our theory of Christian doctrine.

No one can attach importance to this cardinal idea of Puritan polity who has not accepted the idea of the Puritan theology, by which is not intended even the most moderate form of Calvinism, but the doctrine that underlies Calvinism itself, and which is so thoroughly of its essence that opponents not unfrequently class all who accept it under the common designation of Calvinists, although among them are numbers who repudiate all sympathy with what are really the distinctive features of the Calvinistic scheme. That root-principle is most simply and comprehensively stated in the apostolic words, "By

grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." That truth has a far-reaching application. It is the key not only to a theology but to a polity. How a Church constituted of men whose bond of union is their common faith in Christ and common recognition of the Spirit of God as the author and finisher of their spiritual life shall regulate their affairs is a point of secondary importance. They may reserve the direction absolutely to themselves, or vest it in an executive, to which large functions shall be intrusted. The government may be by plebiscite or by representation. Separate communities may maintain their independence of all others, or unite in a confederation managed by common laws, administered by some representative body chosen by themselves. What is essential is that the spiritual conception of the Church be preserved, and this is done so long as the unit is the individual man, whose right belongs to him in consequence of his personal communion with God, and the governing body in the whole Church. The Church does not make the members, but the members constitute the Church. The officers, by whatever title they are known and whatever functions may be committed to them, are the servants of all, the ministers of all, not their priests and rulers. Under such conditions a hierarchy cannot grow up, nor would the authority of a State to declare men Christians be tolerated for an hour. Those whom Christ has made free cannot submit to human bondage, those whom God has called to the fellowship of His Son cannot permit the intrusion of human priests between them and the Father to whom they have this privilege of access. The outward forms of their society are subjects for careful consideration; for even if they are to be determined on

grounds of expediency alone, it is still important to ascertain what methods are likely to be most subservient to the great end for which the society exists. But the spiritual principle touches the very life of the Church, and cannot be compromised without serious peril to doctrine as well as to polity.

To put this in a more concrete form. If Episcopalianism meant nothing more than the government of a number of Churches, all of them composed of professed followers of Christ, and requiring that profession of personal faith in Him as the one condition of communion, under a bishop of their own choice, whether elected by representatives or popular vote, the point at issue between it and a Congregationalism which treats every Church as complete in itself, and owns no outward rule of any kind, would not be one of vital principle. There might still be reasons of sufficient validity for preferring the more simple plan of the latter. It might be contended that Episcopacy is prone to magnify its office, and to assume a power beyond that which the people have given; that in past times it was easily transformed into prelacy, and in all probability would be so again; that its influence is opposed to freedom and elasticity of method, and will for the most part be a powerful force on the side of a stolid Conservatism, unfriendly to growth and progress; and, in general, that Churches left to bear the responsibilities of their own management acquire a robustness and energy which are not developed under other conditions. These reasons may be more or less weighty and conclusive, but none of them suggest that Episcopacy of this character would in any sense be inconsistent with loyalty to evangelical doctrine, or would trench upon the rights of Chris-

tendom. It is a very different matter when the Episcopate introduces a hierarchy and a priesthood, when the priest stands at the very threshold of the Church and himself introduces to its fellowship, when bishops make priests and priests make Christians, when the Church exists by virtue of its ministry instead of the ministry existing by virtue of the Church. To treat this as a subordinate matter is simply impossible. In a system of this kind, not only are the individual privileges of Christians surrendered, but the whole idea of the gospel and of the Christian life is transformed. It is true that there are numbers who rank themselves as Episcopalians, and belong to a Church which sets forth this theory with more or less distinctness, who are themselves jealous for the simplicity that is in Christ. But that only brings us back to the old point, that our judgment is between systems and not individuals. We have to deal with principles, not with the interpretations of them by individuals, or with the generous inconsistency between their spiritual sympathies and the system to which they stand committed.

The doctrine of the Church as embodied in the Episcopalianism with which we have to deal—the Episcopalianism of the Prayer Book, especially as its teachings are now pushed by numbers of the clergy—is a theory which goes much deeper than any points of detail and arrangement, and must be dealt with accordingly. There does not seem to be any reason why a Church which is governed by bishops should not retain simplicity and purity of doctrine. But history teaches that where an episcopate becomes powerful it aspires to become a prelacy, and that a prelacy is sure to lean for support on doctrines and practices

opposed to the spirituality and purity of the gospel. Mr. Gladstone, in his remarkably candid as well as able article on the "Evangelical Movement," after showing how that great revival naturally led on to that which at first sight is most alien to it (Tractarianism), says: "Our Nonconforming friends seem, it must be admitted, in a condition, from their point of view, to admonish both in magisterial tones: 'This is what we have always said: your semi-reformed Church, with her inconsistent laws and institutions all bound up together, is always on the downward gradient which descends to Rome. We teach Evangelical doctrine liberated from such associations, and consequently, as you see, Rome gathers no booty from our homesteads; you teach it in a Church of succession and priesthood, and from among you she makes captives at her will.'"

The Nonconformist case could not have been better put. Indeed, Nonconformists would very properly have hesitated to put it in such strong terms themselves. But this is precisely what our Puritan and Nonconformist fathers did say in their objections to the Prayer Book, and the event has fully verified their predictions. Whether it would be possible to save an Episcopal Church from becoming prelatical is a point which it is not necessary to discuss so long as the system with which we have to deal is prelatical. There are, indeed, individual bishops who have nothing of the prelatical temper, and whose one earnest desire is to prove themselves wise and faithful leaders in Christian work. But the system recognizes the priest and the prelate, and these have as a rule been as unfriendly to liberty and progress as to pure evangelical truth. The controversy, therefore, which gathers around it is something more than a discussion

about forms of government. It is one that goes to the very root of Christianity and the rights of the human conscience. It is only a phase of the old battle between authority and conscience, Scripture and tradition.

A wise and clear-sighted Lliberalism cannot ignore these facts. Even if it be associated with scepticism it should not fail to discriminate between different developments of Christianity. To assume that the gospel is the antagonist of human freedom is to ignore its most characteristic features and to forget some of the most striking pages in its story. To treat all its teachers as "clericals" who are intent on the subjugation of the human intellect, who have no sympathy with the noblest aspirations of humanity, to whom the researches of science are little short of profanity, and the triumphs of freedom a revolt against Divine rights, is to display only the spirit of the blind partizan, not of the philosophical thinker, and to show how far the temper of the bigot may develope itself in the most ardent champions of free thought. Even in the most "clerical" of systems all "clericals" are not Obscurantists; and there are Christian Churches which are as much opposed to clericalism as the most passionate liberals. There can be as little of sound policy as of justice in allowing the hatred of Christianity to become so bitter that the distinction is forgotten, and all its teachers are ranked in the same category and visited with the same condemnation.

Even such errors, however, should never induce us to forget that true Liberalism is in harmony with the purest conceptions of Christianity. Congregationalists at all events receive the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ not because of the authority by which it is supported, but

because of the witness it finds in our own hearts that it is of God. They claim for their Churches no rights except those which have been conferred by the Lord Himself, and are therefore gladly recognized by men who have first yielded themselves, and regard these Churches as His own appointed instruments for the extension of His kingdom. They rest nothing on mere tradition and precedent, nor would they screen any of their principles from the most free and searching investigation. But they are not more ready to prove all things than to hold fast that which is good. Freedom of inquiry is one thing, a state of general suspense in relation to all doctrines and systems another. It may be the melancholy experience of some to find that they are doomed to this perpetual incertitude, but assuredly it is not a condition to be either admired or envied. For those who, happily for themselves, have been able to reach definite opinions, there should be an earnest desire to defend them, and yet at the same time to recognize the service which has been done to the truth of God by rival systems, and to honour the goodness of many of their champions. Liberty is not to be identified with indifference, nor charity to be made a cloak for disloyalty to principle. It is possible to honour the sincerity of those whose teachings we cannot accept, and to unite catholicity of temper with unbending firmness of conviction.

LECTURE III.

THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL.

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IT would be more than uncandid, it would be the climax of blind partisanship, to deny the enormous power enjoyed by the Established Church in this country. Whatever the source from which its influence is derived, its magnitude is unquestionable. It is partly political, partly national, partly religious, and very largely social; but the aggregate of the forces it can command is so great that it must certainly be regarded as the most important factor in the ecclesiastical life of the nation. Opinions vary as to the proportion of good in the power it wields, but there is hardly room for difference as to the preponderating influence it exerts. It is not to be measured by any numerical standard, for it is not confined within the circle of its active members, or even of its nominal adherents. The gradual sweeping away of the exclusive privileges belonging to it, as the Church by law established, has not reduced the power of the Church itself, for any loss thus sustained has been more than counterbalanced by the increase of its spiritual force. As a State institution it was never so weak as it is to-day, as a Church it was never stronger; that is, its hold of political supremacy was never so doubtful, whereas it never gave more evidence of spiritual life.

The Free Churches by which it is surrounded have affected it, but it in its turn is also telling upon them, Taken altogether, its position is unique. All its developments are not healthy, nor all its features worthy of imitation. But it may safely be said that there is not a national Church which retains so strong a hold upon the loyalty of the people whose religious faith it professes to represent, or whose clergy hold a position more honourable and respected. The first care of any one who wishes to form a correct estimate of ecclesiastical England must be to understand the real nature of the power which the Established Church thus wields. He must inquire into the foundations on which it rests, the conditions on which it depends, the relations it bears to other religious forces which are at work in the nation, the extent to which it is affected by the political or intellectual movements of the time. Any view of the present situation as well as any forecast of the future must be largely affected by the conclusions which he forms as to the prospects of the Anglican Church, and these again will be governed to a considerable extent by his judgment as to the relative strength of the contending parties within it. Questions naturally suggest themselves to any thoughtful mind, on the answer to which the future of our systems must largely depend. Which of the different schools of thought in the English Church is most likely to assert its predominance? Is that predominance likely to become so definite as to exclude rival parties, or so to absorb their members in the victorious school that the others shall become practically extinct? Were sacerdotalism to become supreme, would the nation bow its neck to the yoke? If Erastianism should, on the other hand, triumph,

than endanger the existence of the Establishment? Would the interest of Protestantism be secure in the former event? would the maintenance of a testimony even to the cardinal truths of Christianity be preserved in the latter? In the meantime, during the progress of these changes, what attitude would the Free Churches preserve, and how are they, and how is the religious welfare of the nation as a whole, likely to be affected by them? These are among the points which immediately suggest themselves, and we cannot even approach a conjectural solution of them until we have looked carefully into the state of the Anglican Church itself.

A stranger visiting one of our country towns—take, for example, Louth or Boston in Lincolnshire, or Christchurch in Hants—must be struck by the position which the parish church occupies in the place. It is not only the most conspicuous building in the town, but it is the church which gives it a character and dignity. The hoar of the centuries is upon it, and the whole story of the town clusters around it. There may be Dissenting places of worship, which in these modern times are not without architectural pretensions, though they compare but poorly with the magnificent building approaching almost the dignity of a minster, which is the shrine of the established religion. These chapels, indeed, may gather to themselves more of the intellectual life, the spiritual earnestness, the aggressive thought and energy of the community; in some cases even they may attract the highest social influence below the grade of the landed gentry, few of whom are so false to the traditions of their order and the prejudices of their circle as to enter the sectarian conventicle; still, whatever the numbers attending the

chapels, and however beneficial the influences they are exerting, there is a feeling which lingers round the parish church that cannot be rivalled by any of its competitors. It carries the mind back to that past with which Englishmen ever love to identify themselves; there is about it an element of strength and stability of which Englishmen always show a keen appreciation. Even those whom conscience has forced into dissent from its worship have a vague sentiment which they could hardly interpret themselves, which makes them feel that they are not wholly severed from it. It is the church of the parish, and they are parishioners, if nonconforming parishioners. Their ancestors worshipped within its walls; probably they were themselves married at its altar; in its quiet cemetery their fathers, the 'rude forefathers' of the town itself, sleep, and there they expect to be laid to rest by their side. The rector or vicar has an official position which the State gives him, and which itself confers not only dignity but also imposes public duties which bring him into certain relations with all classes of the community. As with the parish church so with its clergyman. Both are regarded as essential parts of the town itself, and the remarkable position they occupy may not improperly be regarded as symbolic of the solidity of that Church to which they belong.

Looking at these external appearances, it is not wonderful that the sanguine members of the Established Church should smile at the idea that it can be menaced with any great change. There is another side of the picture which dees not tell so flattering a tale or give the same encouraging assurances. Under the shadow of the venerable buildings, and the equally venerable

system with which they are connected, Nonconformity has grown to be the power it is in the land to-day. The forces which the parish church represents were far stronger two hundred years ago than they were a century later, more imposing fifty years since than they are to-day, whereas those by which they were opposed were trivial and insignificant at those earlier dates as compared with the resources of Nonconformity now. The retrospect is certainly not sufficient to justify the hopes of those who are set on the attainment of complete religious equality. It may suggest the idea that even now the power is not so great in reality as in appearance. But waiving these doubtful questions, at least for the present, the fact must be recognized that here is a potent force in our English society.

The parish church, in such cases as those referred to, is peculiarly fitted to represent the strength of the national Church. The same sentiment which clings to the building is cherished also in relation to the system. It does not imply a faith in its doctrines, a respect for its rulers or teachers, an attachment to its ritual, still less a regular or even frequent attendance on its services. But as the building is the temple of the parish, so is the Church that of the nation. It is English, and there are multitudes with whom this one quality decides their choice and fixes their attachments. Verily our insular prejudices are sometimes pressed to such an extent as to become simply ridiculous. But where they are engaged it is idle to question their power. No doubt the fact that the Episcopal Church is known as the Church of England implies a great deal. It suggests (what will afterwards be more distinctly seen to be the case) that it is a reflection of English ideas, and that its constitution and

ritual are adapted to the average English mind. It is, indeed, in every sense, of native growth. The national love of compromise, our sturdy independence, our practical temper, are conspicuous in it everywhere. It is as full of anomalies, as contemptuous of logical consistency, as anxious to preserve a safe moderation, as the most patriotic Englishman could desire. English by birth and temperament, it has been made so still more distinctly by habit and tradition. The prestige which it thus enjoys is incalculable. There are numbers who consider that all English institutions are outside the pale of controversy. To question their authority would be disloyalty, to forsake them would be little short of treason. To this cause, perhaps more than any other, is to be attributed the marvellous survival of the Anglican Church, despite the attacks to which it has been exposed, and its even more wonderful power of cohesion amid the fierce strifes and rivalries of contending parties. There is at least as wide a divergence of view between the separate sections of the Anglican Church as between either of them and the Dissenters with whom it is in closest affinity. Yet they continue in the same Church. They dispute, perhaps go to law with each other, indulge in mutual recriminations which do not stop short of imputations of treason to the Church, and indeed to Christ himself, on each side, but they remain united still. It would be as unfair to attribute this to merely sordid motive as it would be a mere affectation of charity to ascribe it to a broad and comprehensive view of the constitution of the Church. There are too many who openly avow their dislike for the kind of Mezentian alliance into which they are forced to render it credible that they are under the dominion

of a catholic temper, and yet the indications of faith and conscientiousness are so numerous as to silence the suggestion that they are linked by fetters of gold. The uniting principle is neither so lofty as it would be on the former supposition, nor so unworthy as it would be on the latter. The Church is kept together by the reluctance strongly felt by each party to separate itself from an English institution and to place itself outside the pale of national life. Other influences doubtless have their own weight, but this national sentiment has a force for which full allowance has perhaps never been made.

The intensely English character of the Church is at once its weakness and strength. It has isolated itself, with characteristic insular pride, alike from the Dissenters at home and from the Protestant Churches of the continent. It has studiously repressed enthusiasm, and in all its formularies and arrangements has sought to pursue that *via media* so dear to the true Englishman's heart. It is not Romish, for it has protested in language sufficiently emphatic against the fables and blasphemies which it has detected in the Romish system. But neither is it Protestant, for it holds fast by what it esteems Catholic principles. It stands alone, and is English, cold, moderate, practical, anxious to escape the reproach of any sympathy with mysticism and yet to escape the reproach of lawlessness. One of its former admirers has said that it has not produced many saints. That, indeed, has never been its glory. Rational godliness, that is, a godliness which does not love excitement or indulge in raptures, or yield to any weakness of sentiment, and is never betrayed into any passionate devotion, but maintains its integrity and orthodoxy without reproach, is its ideal. It has reared men of a different order, undoubtedly; but

they were not of the true Anglican type, and they would never have found a home in the Anglican Church but for the readiness with which its arrangements have lent themselves to all kinds of adaptations. Evangelicals with the fervour of a Newton, and High Churchmen with the mystical devoutness of a Pusey, have found it possible to harmonize with their own temper the teachings and formularies of the Establishment, but assuredly neither the one nor the other is the true representative of the Anglican spirit, whose ruling sentiment is a hatred of that enthusiasm which both alike cultivated. "Other faiths," says one of the most able and loyal sons of the Church, "apply themselves to the feelings, emotions, and imaginations of men; this to their reason and conscience. Other Churches lay hold of the spiritual nature of man; this of his moral and utilitarian."[1] In other words, it is distinctly Anglican.

But if for spirits who feel the need of a more spiritual element, who have affections and emotions, who demand that a religion should meet the cravings of the heart, and not be thus coldly utilitarian, this is a source of weakness, it cannot be questioned, on the other side, that the ultimate association between the Church and the national history and life has told and still tells powerfully in its favour. Up to a certain point Dissenters have no right to grudge the advantage which it has thus derived. To the honour accruing from its faithful sons who have been true patriots, or learned men, or devout Christians, it is fairly entitled. The grievance of Dissenters is that their exclusion from the national seats of learning and from posts of public influence prevented them until a com-

[1] Rev. J. S. Brewer, Introduction to *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, vol. iv. p. dclvii.

paratively recent day from taking their proper place in the noble rivalry of Christian patriotism. But it would be a wretched sectarianism indeed if any resentment for the injustice they have suffered were to prevent them from appreciating the rich contribution which the Anglican Church has made to the intellectual, the political, and the religious life of the nation. There are illustrious names associated with the work of Dissent, but the Episcopal Church is the Church of the nation; and from the expulsion of the Nonconformists in 1662, almost down to the times to which the memory of living men extends, Dissenters were so feeble a folk, and thrust so completely outside the currents of national life, that outsiders might be forgiven who ignored their existence and identified the nation and the Church. Certain it is that in every department of learning the conspicuous men, with but few exceptions, owe allegiance to the Established Church. The prestige which has thus attached to the Church could not fail to tell enormously in its favour. Dissent is regarded as provincial, and therefore narrow and uncultured, and the elevating tone of national sentiment is supposed to be restricted within the privileged enclosures of the Established Church.

This feeling of nationality has undoubtedly had its influence on the leaders of the Church itself, but the impression produced on behalf of the system is a still more decided advantage. A Church which has any claim to be regarded as national will necessarily attract a large number of adherents whatever be its intrinsic merits. The sovereign is its temporal head, its chief rulers sit in the legislature, its clergy have an official position assigned to them by the law, the great families are, with a few exceptions who cleave to the older

Church, among its members. All the power of fashion is thus arrayed on its side. Society scarcely deigns to recognize any other religious community, and if reminded of the existence of Dissenters, receives the mention with well-bred indifference. When a Church which thus appeals to some of the less worthy and noble sentiments has also other qualities and associations which address themselves to feelings of a higher order, it cannot but possess enormous power—and power which it would not wholly lose though the tie which connects it with the State were severed. The national idea, which is itself such an element of strength, would still linger round it, though the fact that it had ceased to be the Church of the nation should be recognized, and a system of religious equality be substituted for sectarian privilege.

The Episcopal Church is chargeable with many faults. There are periods of its history over which its attached sons would gladly draw the veil of oblivion, there are acts to which it has committed itself for which they could not attempt an apology. But despite all, it has a record of which as a whole its sons feel proud, and some of whose passages touch the heart of every true Englishman. Its early bishops may not always have shown themselves the spiritual heroes which they were at one time pictured. They breathed the infected atmosphere of the court and may have imbibed some of the poison. They moved amid the corruptions of a selfish and faithless Erastianism, and they did not wholly escape the taint. They had been educated in the traditions of priesthood and hierarchy, and their souls had been too strongly possessed by their superstition and pride for them to be able entirely to shake off the bondage. But many of them died for their religion and their Church, and their

names are enshrined in the hearts of true Englishmen, who remember only the fact of their martyrdom, and have little patience with the attempts to disparage their heroism. The fires of Smithfield and the heroic deeds of the Elizabethan time are among the memories which the Anglican Church has inherited and on which its children dwell with pride, as signs that it has reared heroes and martyrs. A Church which has such traditions is regarded by the people as Protestant, and its Protestantism commands their sympathy. No doubt there are large classes outside the ranks of the Nonconformist Churches who for various reasons, political and social quite as much as religious, regard the Establishment with jealousy and positive aversion. But it would be extreme folly to allow any prejudice to blind us to the fact that a Church which bears the English name, which has throughout our history been one of our national institutions, which, for good or for evil, has borne a prominent part in our national struggles, which has largely enriched our literature, and has from age to age ministered to the devotion of multitudes of our people, has, and will continue to have, a strong hold on the affections of a great part of the community.

The feeling with which it is regarded is, to a considerable extent, independent of the particular doctrines which it teaches. It is not attachment to the three Creeds and the Thirty-nine Articles, for numbers of those who cherish it are ignorant of the Articles and hold the more elaborate of the Creeds in abhorrence. Nor does it always imply a profound reverence for episcopal rule, for the keenest critics of the bishop are often found among those who love the outward pomp of the hierarchy and have a high appreciation of the lustre which a mitre

sheds upon the social circle. It does mean a love for the Book of Common Prayer, which may in multitudes of cases be a mere sentiment, but which is both widespread and powerful. When analyzed it will be seen that many elements contribute to it—that innumerable associations, which cannot be fully understood except by those whom they affect, cluster around it, that the reverence for antiquity, the deference to fashion, and the chivalrous devotion to party all unite to strengthen it, but that underlying the whole is a deep patriotic feeling. It is an English book, and Englishmen feel, not unjustly, that they have a right to be proud of it, as second only to the English Bible among the forces which this country has given to the religious work of the world. Many may question whether it deserves all the eulogies which have been passed upon it, even as a book of devotion and without reference to the special doctrinal teaching which it contains. But the sentiment which gathers round it is independent of any critical or even spiritual estimate of its merit. Critics may point to its redundances of expression as defects that mar its beauty as a great English composition. Devout and spiritual men may complain that it is pitched in too low a key and never attempts the higher strains of devotion. But such exceptions are utterly futile if intended to abate the feeling with which it is regarded. Mr. Brewer, who is a very accurate reflection of pure Anglican sentiment, describes it "as a book of social prayer, the most wonderful achievement of any age—the greatest, next the Bible, of any human production." The peculiar qualities which excite his admiration and that of the class he represents furnish the clearest evidence of the point before us, that in its distinctively English character the

one main secret of its popularity is to be found. "It is not," says Mr. Brewer, "the genuine product of the Reformation;" which means that while it is not Romish, it is not distinctively Protestant, but the true expression of a type of religion which, according to this author, found favour with our middle classes. His use of the term, which it may be necessary to criticize afterwards, is somewhat curious, but the idea is correct. The "middle classes" of whom he speaks correspond to the "Left Centre," and in England the Left Centre in its more moderate form prevails. It made the Anglican Reformation, and to that we owe the Prayer Book, which thus appeals to the patriotic and devotional feelings of a class even more powerful in social influence than in numerical strength, and which remains the strongest bulwark by which the Anglican Church is defended. Extreme men on both sides attempt to modify or propose to alter it only to provoke such quiet sneers as that in which Mr. Brewer indulges against the "impenetrable self-satisfaction with which lay and clerical reformers who could not compose one of the simplest of its collects propose to dismember, to reform, or to modify it." It is in vain that the people are told that the root of the Ritualist teaching they dislike is in the Prayer Book, and that it ought to be revised. It is not revised, and it may be safely predicted that were a revision carried out it would be fraught with disaster to the Church itself.

That Church has long cast a spell on the imagination of the people, to whose fascination Dissenters are fully alive. The two stately piles which stand by the side of that silent highway on which floats the trade of our great metropolis are themselves symbols of its power. From the ends of the earth men come to see the glories

of St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey. Children in those great empires of our own race which are growing up on the distant continents of America and Australia learn to hold these venerable buildings of the fatherland in affectionate reverence, and nurse the hope that they may one day see the hoary towers and the lofty domes linked in their memory with all the most stirring incidents in the story of their race. To Englishmen they are not so much the homes of an individual Church as the heritage of the nation. The veneration, however, which clings to them is in some measure transferred to the Church by which they are held. But why multiply illustrations or proofs? The feeling is one with which all Englishmen are familiar. The position of the Episcopal Church is and must be unique, because of the national sentiment which gathers around it.

Its defenders do it a gross injustice, and have evidently a very imperfect appreciation of its real strength, when they suggest that its strength depends mainly upon its relations to the State, and that Disestablishment would mean grievous disaster. It would alter the relations of different parties, it would lead to a modification of plans, it might deprive the Church of what can never be a source of real power, the support of some who care for it only as a political instrument; but freedom would bring with it gains in increased elasticity and spiritual power which would far more than compensate for the loss of any material advantages, and would increase its spiritual power. Were a sectarian progress the object which Nonconformists had in view in their contention for religious equality, their sagacity would be open to reasonable doubt. The attraction which the Episcopal Church has for many in virtue of

its associations, its æsthetics, or its polity, is neutralized at present by the repulsion produced by its subjection to the State. Remove these hindrances, so that these other influences may have free play, and the Church is sure to gain not a few who are at present kept in the ranks of Nonconformity by their repugnance to Erastianism.

Whatever be the value of these forecasts, certain it is that the Episcopal Church is likely long to continue the most powerful Church in the kingdom, and no true Nonconformist can grudge it the distinction, so long as it is due solely to the influence of its teachings and works. But granting this, there is cause for reasonable anxiety as to the side on which the influence of that Church will be cast in the conflicts which are before us. The struggle between authority and conscience becomes keener every decade, and it is of no trivial importance to ascertain what part a community so powerful and professing to maintain its own *via media* will play in the controversy. There are contending forces within itself, and the question which suggests itself is as to which is likely to prevail. It may help us to an answer if we survey carefully the position of these opposing parties, so as to determine which may claim best to represent the actual mind of the Church, and which is best fitted to assert a decisive hold on the minds of the people. It will be necessary to this that we indulge to some extent in historical retrospect. The roots of present movements must be sought in the past, and our idea of their probable future determined by a review of their past story. We commence with the Evangelicals, and in order to understand their position and appreciate their work we must take a general view of the English Church and nation at the time when the party came into existence.

I.

The eighteenth century was the golden age of the Establishment, an age of brass, or rather of iron, for the Church. Everything resembling vital godliness was under a ban at the very time when mobs gathered to resist any concession to Nonconformity, and the cry of the "Church in danger" was enough to overturn a ministry and set the nation in a blaze. It is the common habit, especially of those who have not learned the true lesson of the times, to assert that Churchmen and Dissenters were sunk in common apathy and indifference. The clergy were asleep, and the Dissenters were encouraging them in their slumbers. "Both parties," says the Bishop of Liverpool, "seemed at last agreed on one point, and that was to let the devil alone, and to do nothing for hearts and souls. And as for the weighty truths for which Hooper and Latimer had gone to the stake, and Baxter and scores of Puritans had gone to jail, they seemed clean forgotten and laid on the shelf."[1] A sweeping statement like this cannot be accepted by Nonconformists, especially in the face of the fact that even in those dark times they can point to men of eminent goodness, from Calamy down to Watts and Doddridge. It is true that the two latter, who saw the beginning of the great Evangelical revival, regarded it from the first with something worse even than suspicion. But it would be unjust to argue from this that they had any want of sympathy with its fundamental principles.

In that great movement, as in all others of the kind, there were extravagances and eccentricities, not to say

[1] *Christian Leaders of the Last Century*, p. 14.

follies and superstitions. By us these slight blemishes in a noble work have been almost forgotten, and when they are remembered, they are reckoned as but the small dust of the balance in comparison with the pure gold which has stood the test of time, and whose value is more appreciated to-day than ever. But with contemporaries, even those who were most in sympathy with the spiritual aims of the revivalists, the faults bulked so largely as to conceal the real good that was being done, and to suggest doubts as to its genuineness and permanence. As time went on the real character of the work became apparent, and those who had doubted, not because they were disloyal to Evangelical truth or averse to Evangelical fervour, but because they were offended by some crudities in teaching and some signs of fanaticism in feeling, gratefully recognized the hand of God.

Their mistake ought to serve as a warning against hasty judgments of great religious movements because of the faults into which emotionalism is pretty sure always to be betrayed, but it must not be allowed to blind us as to the real cause of their error. Mr. Lecky, in his *History of the Eighteenth Century*, does more justice to Nonconformists when he tells us, "The Independents are said to have been attached more generally to Evangelical doctrines than any other sect, and in the Church of England itself we may find some traces of a more active religious life. They were, however, chiefly in the last years of the seventeenth century and in the first quarter of the eighteenth century."[1] The fact seems to be that everywhere there was a lack of spiritual life. The age hated

[1] *History of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii. p. 545.

enthusiasm, and the effect of its chilling cynicism was felt by the Churches. In the Church of England there was a widespread Rationalism; among the Presbyterians, especially among the wealthier classes and in their seminaries, a semi-Arianism was rife; and if the Independents held more closely to the Evangelical creed, there was little earnestness shown in its diffusion, and nothing of that spiritual enthusiasm which inspired Wesley and Whitefield and soon wrought a marvellous revolution in the religious life of the country. Still it ought not to be forgotten that it is to this period we owe the hymns of Doddridge, and the still richer and more abundant contributions of Watts to our psalmody. When it is remembered what those hymns are, it can hardly be said that Independents had forsaken evangelical truth. Would that all the hymns of to-day were as full of true theology and devout spiritual sentiment as the strains—"When I survey the wondrous cross," "Come, let us join our cheerful songs," "Grace, 'tis a charming sound," "My God, I own Thy sovereign right," which were then and are still so familiar in Dissenting sanctuaries.

According to Mr. Brewer, the Englishman whose views are embodied in the National Church is above all things moderate and utilitarian. "Though his Christianity is decorous, it is never enthusiastic; though it enters into his daily life, it is never elevated. He is moral, but not devout; religious, but not fervent; strictly observant of his duties, but intolerant and impatient of anything beyond them." [1] As he is, so is the Church which he has made. And certainly the Church of the eighteenth century exactly corresponds to this. Moderation was its idol as far as the

[1] *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, vol. iv. p. v.

religious principle was concerned. In polemics it was passionate, fervid, intolerant, being fitly represented by Sacheverel, Atterbury, and Swift. But of zeal for the gospel, of yearning compassion for the souls of men, of earnest striving after a holier and better life, the traces are few indeed. Its divines might deprecate infidelity and enter into the lists with the deists and free-thinkers of the time, but their devotion to Christianity was all expended in their polemics, and never expressed itself in forceful appeals to the heart and conscience.

There was no failure to inculcate the principles of morality, nor does there seem to have been in the conduct of the clergy generally any shameless disregard of the precepts they gave from the pulpit. The Church was "moral but not devout, religious but not fervent." For three-quarters of a century the ideal of the typical Anglican was realized. Neither Puritans nor Catholics, with their opposing enthusiasms, interfered with its development. The former were cast out by the Act of Uniformity and any influence which the latter would have exerted was withdrawn when the Nonjurors seceded from the Church, the rightful authority of whose chief ruler they could not conscientiously acknowledge. Puritans and Nonjurors were as far removed from each other in political opinion as in ecclesiastical sympathy; neither party was able at the time to do justice to the merit of the other, and both would have been considerably surprised if it had been suggested to them that underneath all their bitter antagonisms there was a true unity. But we who contemplate them from a distance can recognize a vital unity which the clouds of controversy concealed from them, and can rejoice that to an age which specially needed such teaching, both witnessed to the majesty of truth

and the supremacy of conscience. Their separation from the Anglican Church, however, left the power absolutely in the hands of what may be regarded as the English Moderates.

For those dreary years of the Hanoverian period Erastianism was let alone, untroubled by "spiritual idealism of any kind"—by what Mr. Brewer calls "any knight-errantry for Heaven." It was the nearest approach that could be made in a country in which Christian ideas had been dominant for centuries to an experiment of what could be done by a Church which quietly resolved to ignore the supernatural element of Christianity. What the result was to the nation will be apparent afterwards. As to the Church, it all but ensured its destruction. Without the revival which came successively from the opposite sides, first from the Evangelicals, and then from the Catholics, the Church of England would have ceased to exist as a national Establishment. It was saved from annihilation by the resurrection of the forces which it had done its utmost to extinguish.

It may be doubted whether the Erastian idea is ever likely to have another opportunity such as that which it enjoyed in the beginning of the reign of Queen Anne. Active opposition had then been subdued, the High Church sentiment was supreme, and the difficulty was to prevent legislation which would have made the Toleration Act a nullity. The High Churchman of that day was a very different character from his successor of our times. The party names have remained, and perhaps even a party succession may be traced, but the original ground of distinction has long since been shifted. The differences signified by these historical appellations to-day are theo-

logical, ritualistic, and ecclesiastical, but in the last century they were mainly political. Swift and Atterbury were High Churchmen, but the interval is wide indeed which separates them from the late Bishop Hamilton, or Dean Hook, or from Dr. Pusey, or Canon Liddon. The political idea which was supreme with the former is of very slight importance to the latter. The High Church sentiment which was prevalent in the days of Queen Anne and her successors was that of supremacy as against Dissenters; the contention was not for doctrines or ceremonies, but for political authority. The most famous Church hero of the times was Sacheverel, and his popularity was due to the fierceness with which he assailed all Whigs and Dissenters, and maintained the Divine right of the Crown. "Church and State" was the cry, the Church upholding the right of the Crown to a power little short of despotism, and receiving in its turn absolute supremacy. Sacheverel himself was not so much the creator as the creature of the violent storm on whose wave he rode to notoriety. "Imperious political forces," according to Dr. Burton, made him what he was. "Accident brought him within sweep of these powers, and a certain personal quality, not of any exalted kind, made him master of the situation when he found himself in it—that quality was vanity."[1] A melancholy time that must have been in which a clergyman, whose ruling quality was vanity, could so avail himself of the political passion of the moment as to raise himself to eminence, and to become in fact the representative Churchman of the day.

Other causes helped to produce this result, but a career like that of Sacheverel would have been impos-

[1] *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*, vol. ii. p. 184.

sible but for the overwhelming power which the Anglican Church, as an Establishment, enjoyed at the time. Its force in Parliament was all but omnipotent, and had it been directed to the accomplishment of the objects which a Church ought to keep nearest to its heart, ought to have produced great results. But there is only a dreary record of selfish indolence on the part of the rulers and of a consequent neglect of the spiritual interests of the people. For the wind which was sown then, the Church is reaping the whirlwind even to-day. Some work was undoubtedly done to which Churchmen may look back with satisfaction. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge began its active and useful career. An attempt was made to provide for the spiritual destitution of London, and the fund for the help of poor livings, with which the name of Queen Anne is honourably associated, was established. But this is a poor record for a Church which had the responsibility of providing for the religious teaching of the people, and which had done its utmost to prevent others from taking any part in the work. As a matter of fact, the negligence of the Church of that time prepared a work for its successors to-day which they are vainly endeavouring to overtake. The rulers of the Church of the eighteenth century were far more intent on putting down Dissenters than on making Christians, and while they busied themselves in political intrigues to maintain their supremacy, neglected the opportunity for laying deep the foundations of that supremacy in the usefulness of the Church, and the attachment won by the abundance of its labours. Had the zeal which was shown by the promoters of Occasional Conformity and Schism Bills, which from time to time stirred up angry political strife and sec-

tarian bitterness and popular fury, been displayed in the spiritual work of the Church, how different an aspect would the story of the times have worn, and how different might the subsequent fortunes of the Church itself have been. But the one thought was political power; and while no efforts were spared to strengthen the defences of the Establishment, little or no care was given to the spiritual welfare of the Church.

II.

Those who are fascinated by the promises of Erastianism would do well to study this period, for in it their theory had its full development and perfect work. It is alleged, indeed, by High Church writers that the accession of the House of Hanover placed the enemies of the Church in power; that though Anne and her ministers were friendly to Church extension, at her death there was an entire change of policy; and that the aim of Sir. R. Walpole was to humiliate the clergy and corrupt the Churches. But this does not really affect the point before us. Walpole cared for Dissenters as little as for Churchmen, as little as he cared for any class of men except so far as they could be made useful for his ambition. Yet it is hardly to be supposed that Bolingbroke, the darling statesman of the High Church party, had more real affection for the Church, or was more desirous to advance its spiritual prosperity. The one desired to use it for Tory, and the other for Whig purposes, but the latter was not more indifferent to its higher interests than the other. "Walpole's one idea of managing ecclesiastical affairs," as Mr. Overton tells us, "was to keep things quiet. He calmed down all opposition to the

Church from without, but he conferred a very questionable benefit on her by this policy." Both statesmen were alike Erastians, and the sole difference between the policy of Anne and that of her successors was that the Tories, who were favourites with the Queen, patronized that party of the clergy which was favourable to extravagant ideas of royal right and supremacy; and the other, those of more constitutional tendencies. Dissenters met with no favour from either. Both were professed friends of the Church, and both dealt with it in the true Erastian spirit, for it is impossible to suppose that either had any thought of its spiritual interests. For an outsider, indeed, it is difficult to determine whether it is more humiliating to the Church that it should once have been ruled by Walpole, or that it should have accepted the patronage and friendship of Bolingbroke. The supremacy of the Establishment, however, was preserved not only inviolate but unmenaced under the Hanoverian kings as well as under Queen Anne.

That was the time when the Church had all but a monopoly of the religious instruction of the people. The soul of the parish clergyman was seldom vexed by the intrusion of his Dissenting rival. Dissenting communities there were, but they were few and feeble, and content to be obscure. They had only just vindicated their right to exist, and it seemed not impossible that some turn of the wheel might deprive them of the concessions extorted with so much difficulty. They had not strength enough to make themselves troublesome; indeed, had not so far recovered from the effects of the persecution to which they had been subjected as to think of aggression. Practically, bishops and the clergy reigned supreme, and if a National Church could have saved the nation the

work would have been accomplished. It is as difficult to exaggerate the predominance which the Establishment enjoyed at that time as it certainly is to overstate the completeness of its failure. Mr. Overton in the remarkably able and candid history of the Church of England of the last century, which he wrote in conjunction with Mr. Abbey, says, "Sad, indeed, is the contrast between the promise and the performance. Look at the Church of the eighteenth century in prospect, and a bright scene of uninterrupted triumph might be anticipated. Look at it in retrospect, as it is pictured by many writers of every school of thought, and a dark scene of melancholy failure presents itself. Not that this latter view is altogether a correct one. Many as were the shortcomings of the English Church at the period, her condition was not so bad as it has been represented." [1]

This is not saying much in abatement of the sweeping condemnations which have been pronounced, but it is doubtful whether it is not more than can be sustained. It is hard, indeed, to see what there is to relieve the darkness of the picture which the Anglican Church presents from the death of Queen Anne to the time of the Evangelical revival. No doubt it is conceivable that things might have been worse. The clergy might have scandalized their profession by evil lives. This cannot be laid to their charge. Though negligent of duty and, to a large extent, unfaithful to the gospel which they were bound to preach, lacking not only in fervour but also in faith, and eager only in the pursuit of selfish ends, they were not profligate or immoral. But in all the higher qualities of Christian ministers they were lacking. Mr. Leslie Stephen, speaking of Bishop Butler,

[1] *English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. ii. p. 2.

says, "He stands out in strange contrast with the pushing patronage-hunters of his generation." The epithet conveys a severe condemnation, but not more severe than deserved. The higher ranks of the clergy especially were open to this charge, and the prevalence of such a spirit deprived them of any influence they might have exerted over those in humbler position. Episcopal authority perhaps never told for less, for the simple reason that the bishops were regarded as the nominees of the Court, and thus lost to a large extent the respect of the clergy. Often non-residents and pluralists themselves, it was impossible that they could rebuke the shameful neglect of their duties by the parochial clergy, and in many cases it is impossible to suppose that they had any disposition to do so. Discipline was a thing unknown, and as the result a general condition of indolence and neglect prevailed. The sheep had shepherds regularly commissioned and liberally paid, but they were uncared for and untended. The Church had become simply a department of the State, and a department whose officers were, even in those days of general corruption and abuse, conspicuous examples of inattention to duty. The records of the revival convict them not only of gross negligence themselves, but of bitter opposition to those who sought to repair the effects of their lack of service.

It is unnecessary to quote testimonies here as to the weakness of the pulpit, and the poverty and unimpressiveness of the sermons which were preached; to the contemptuous indifference with which a large proportion of the clergy ignored the distinctive truths of Christianity, and mocked hungry souls with the dry husks of a heartless morality; to their neglect of the more spiritual function of their sacred office, and to the

consequent prevalence among the people of an immorality and ungodliness passing on to absolute heathenism. In face of facts, the evidence for which meets us in all kinds of writers, it is hardly worth while inquiring whether Bishop Ryle is indulging in exaggeration when he says, "The sermons were unspeakably and undescribably bad, and it is comforting to reflect that they were generally preached to empty benches."

Looked at from a religious or even a moral point of view, there is not a sadder period of the English story than that of which we are speaking. Public spirit seemed to be almost extinct, and political virtue had come to be little more than a name. Not only were the constituencies corrupt, but the House of Commons itself was not pure; indeed, if we are to trust some reports, its venality might almost match that of Sandwich and Canterbury in our own time. And the tendency was from bad to worse, until the lowest point had been reached in the reign of George II., and the early days of his successor. All the light that we get upon the internal history of the period only deepens the impression of the utter rottenness and corruption of society everywhere. One of the latest contributions to our knowledge of the times has been furnished by Mr. Trevelyan in his *Memoirs of the Early Life of Fox.* Two or three sentences must suffice to give the author's conception of the morals of the society on which the young man was launched. "The ministers who guided the State, whom the king delighted to honour, who had the charge of public decency and order, who named the fathers of the Church, whose duty it was (to use the words of their monarch) 'to prevent any alteration in so essential a part of the constitution as everything that relates to religion,' were conspicuous

for impudent vice, for daily dissipation, for pranks which would have been regarded as childish and unbecoming by the cornets of a crack cavalry regiment in the worst days of military license."[1] The Duke of Grafton, long a leading minister, and a special favourite with a sovereign who is continually held up as the type of royal piety, and about whose goodness such tender and touching stories are told, was not only flagrantly immoral, but gloried in his shame, and had the insolence to flaunt his vice in the face of royalty itself. "But George III. was willing that the Duke of Grafton should bring whom he pleased under the same roof as the queen, so long as he kept such people as Rockingham, and Burke, and Richmond out of the Cabinet."[2]

Here, no doubt, it was the influence of the court which told so disastrously; but the head of that court was the monarch whom the Church of England had specially delighted to honour. With him the virtue of virtues was loyalty. Subservience to his will covered a multitude of sins, and, as might be expected, there were sins enough to cover even among the most exalted personages in the kingdom. Emphatically was it true that the wicked walked on every side and the vilest men were exalted. A country committed to the rule of Grafton, Weymouth, and Sandwich was indeed in evil condition. "Personal morality became a party question; the standard of virtue was lowered to meet the convenience of the court; and whosoever was desirous of evincing his attachment to the king was in a hurry to assure mankind that he condoned the vices of the minister."

A Church which had allowed such a state of things to grow up, and which was silent and powerless in the

[1] *Early History of C. J. Fox*, p. 74. [2] Ibid.

presence of such monstrous evils, is condemned on evidence that cannot be gainsaid. As the court was, so was society. In those days Mr. Trevelyan describes it as "one vast casino." The influence of society, of course, permeated and corrupted the country by the leaven of its wickedness. A baptized paganism, and paganism not of a high order, approaching more nearly the type of Elagabalus than that of Marcus Aurelius, was the religion of a large part of England at the time.

Had the report of these things come only from one class of writers, it might have been hoped that it was highly coloured by party bias or by religious zeal. But the witnesses are of all varieties of opinion, and many of them without bias of any kind. Among them are prelates like Butler, and retailers of scandal like Lord Hervey and Horace Walpole, novelists such as Fielding and Smollett, whose pages reflect the state of morals at the time, and historians differing in political sympathies, who honestly report what they have found in the contemporary accounts. Whatever kind of book we open the testimony is the same. Some bewail the degeneracy of the times, while others narrate the stories connected with them only as significant facts, which as faithful narrators they are bound to chronicle. But as to the facts, divines and historians, gossiping scandal-mongers and politicians, philosophers and biographers are agreed. Amid satirists there is endless diversity as to the cause of the disease, there is general agreement that England was largely suffering from a moral pestilence under whose destructive influence faith, purity, and integrity were withering away.

Such was the product of an attempt which is being repeated to-day—to have a Christianity without a Christ,

to treat the more spiritual elements of religion as a mystical fancy by which sensible men could not longer be deceived, to ignore the supernatural, and to reduce religion to that cold and formal morality the ideal of which is presented to us in the "Whole Duty of Man," one of the characteristic books of the century. Such was the outcome of a State Church conformed to the Erastian model and deprived of the spiritual influence exerted by evangelical truth. The late Sir James Stephen makes an incidental observation in which may be found the key of a good deal of Anglican Church history. Speaking of the leaders of the Evangelical revival, he says, "They all reached and adhered to their system of divinity which has so long arrested the corruption and prevented the fall of our Elizabethan Church economy."[1] Had this been written at a later period, after the Tractarian movement had developed its full power, it is possible that the philosophic observer might have qualified his observation so far as to recognize that wherever there is spiritual life there is the salt which might save a Church from corruption and decay. Whether in the ultimate issue sacerdotalism can give it vitality, and whether the existence of an Establishment in which it is the supreme idea is possible in England, is a point for future discussion. Sir James Stephen's opinion is quoted here only to show that the Elizabethan Church economy could only be saved from overthrow by a power which borrows its influence from outside itself.

The history of the eighteenth century is a proof that the one desire of the times was to stamp out enthusiasm. No element is more alien to the spirit of a State Church, none more dangerous to its safety, and the one thought

[1] *Essay on the Evangelical Succession*, p. 401.

of Erastian rulers in that day, as indeed at all times, was to be rid of it. "*Pas trop de zèle*" was the motto of statesmen and prelates alike. They had their own way, but the nation had to gather the fruit of their devices. For nearly a century the policy of stamping out enthusiasm was pursued, and the end was a state of unfaith, ungodliness, and unrighteousness such as has no parallel in our history. The religion of conduct was the chief theme of the pulpit, and the people who heard cast off restraints upon conduct altogether. The State Church pure and simple, and without the infusion of the nobler elements and mightier forces which enthusiasm alone can supply, and without the co-operation (to any considerable extent) of the Churches which derive their power solely from faith and love, was weighed in the balances and it was found wanting. The experiment has been made, and the story of the eighteenth century is the record of its failure. It teaches us in characters so plain that a babe might decipher them, that a religion may have the protection of the State, the defence of established creeds, and such power as moral teaching can command, but that without a living faith in Christ and a simple proclamation of His gospel it will speedily become as a tree twice dead, plucked up by the roots.

III.

No description could be more appropriate than that which designates the movement which delivered England from this condition as the Evangelical Revival. It was like new life from the dead to the Dissenting communities, to whom it came as a fresh inspiration, and it was new life to the multitudes who thrilled under the power

of the evangelists, who proclaimed the old truth with which they were so unfamiliar that it had to them the surprise of novelty and the force of a fresh revelation. By and by also it became a new life to the Established Church, which for long did its utmost to repress the enthusiasm and zeal which were destined to work in it a religion that has given it a new tenure of existence. It is certainly not too much to say that if the Establishment had had to meet the storm of excitement and discussion, and of reforming energy, tending strongly towards revolutionary violence, which marked the resurrection of Liberalism after the long Tory *régime* which ended in 1830, without the fresh power which had come to it from the work of the Evangelical party, it could not have weathered the perils of the time.

When Earl Grey in a memorable speech warned the bishops to put their house in order, most fortunately for them some progress had already been made in that direction, or the danger would not have been so easily escaped. The Evangelicals had done nothing towards conciliating Liberal sympathy, for in their political action they were then as ever generally found on the side of Conservatism; but they had redeemed the Church from the opprobrium which must always attach to any institution that has outlived its usefulness, and they had lent themselves to some of those great social and moral reforms on which the heart of true Liberals were set. As it was, the vessel was so heavily laden with the memories and abuses of an evil past, that it trembled under the force of the winds which it had to face, and it was saved because already it had been lightened of some of its burden, and so far repaired as to make it more capable of service.

The movement was distinctively Evangelical; that is, the work of the gospel itself. By the "foolishness of preaching" the heart of England was stirred to its very depths, and stirred as it had not been since the days of the Reformation. Indeed it is extremely doubtful whether, at the period of the Reformation, the English people were as deeply and widely moved as they were by the preaching of Wesley and of Whitefield. It was the misfortune of England that she had no Reformer who could be placed in the same rank as Luther or Calvin or Knox. The preaching of Latimer and others produced a strong impression, but it is questionable whether its effect was equal to that resulting from the work of the eighteenth century evangelists. The power which these men wielded was all the more remarkable because none of the men, and especially none of those who were directly connected with the Established Church, and who may be regarded as the founders of the Evangelical party, were distinguished either for their position or their learning. John Wesley was not only a great preacher, but he had a genius for direction and organization which marked him out as a leader of men. Whitefield must have been a consummate orator, but he was neither a profound thinker nor an accomplished theologian. Yet these two men shook England to its centre, and were the pioneers of a movement which has been nothing short of a revolution. The Evangelical leaders who remained within the Anglican Church itself were men of even lower intellectual calibre. If John Newton influenced great masses of men, it certainly was not due to the force of his intellect, to anything original in his presentation of the gospel, or to any wonderful gift of eloquence which he possessed,

but solely to the intense and unmistakable earnestness with which he commended to the hearts and consciences of others the truth which had taken such complete possession of his own soul. If the commentaries of Thomas Scott have enjoyed such extraordinary popularity, and have proved of such inestimable value to multitudes of souls, assuredly it is not because of the learning which the devout author brought to the elucidation of Scripture, but to the evangelical simplicity of the teaching and the humble devoutness of spirit which they breathe throughout. Perhaps it has been the misfortune of the party that they achieved their success with such instruments; for it seems sometimes to have led them to depreciate human learning unwisely and unjustly. But the fact is not to be denied that deliverance was wrought out for the Church and the nation by men whose power was derived from the inspiring power of the truth which they preached.

Passing over Wesley, whose career will have to be considered in another connection, it must be said that there was little in any of these men to mark them out as leaders in a great revival. The tapster at a Gloucester inn and a slave-trader on the African coast seemed of all men among the least likely to play a prominent part in such a movement. Whitefield was undoubtedly endowed with rare rhetorical powers. What he was as a preacher we must judge from the recorded results of his sermons rather than from the sermons themselves. Sermons which move vast multitudes are seldom those which delight us most in the quiet contemplation of the study. But in Whitefield's case especially the discourses were too long, and the preaching too frequent, to allow of care being expended

on their composition. Art there was, but it was simply that divine art—the fruit of spiritual feeling rather than of intellectual study, an intuition of sympathy more than a product of science—which enables a preacher who has forgotten self, reputation, and human criticism, everything but the one purpose of glorifying Christ by the salvation of souls, "to become all things to all men, that by all means he may save some," and thus makes him a power. It is this which explains the all but miraculous results of Whitefield's ministry. It has been said that he was a great histrionic genius—as unquestionably he was—but this is not sufficient to explain what he was and what he did. Day after day and week after week he preached, and sometimes two or three hours at a time, and two or three times a day. The power of bearing the physical fatigue itself was marvellous, and the capacity for enduring the mental and nervous strain still more extraordinary; but the hold which he was able to gain on the attention of vast audiences was the most remarkable of all. Not only did his hearers not grow weary, but they were affected as hearers are seldom moved except under the overmastering excitement of some great political or personal controversy. Whitefield made all who listened to him feel that the truths which he preached were just as real, as full of life and personal interest, as exciting to all his thoughts and affections, as those earthly objects of the hour are to those who struggle for them. Garrick had no need to address to him his celebrated lesson. He brought to his work skill hardly inferior to that of the great actor himself, not, indeed, with the idea of presenting fictions with such an air of realism as to make them appear truths, but to make the truths themselves stand out with such clear-

ness and vividness and force that men should feel them to be not mere dead fossils from an old-world creed but living truths which to the heart of the preacher were the most precious realities in all the world.

To Whitefield may be traced the revival so far as the Church of England is concerned. It is true that he himself practically became a Dissenter, and that to his labours the formation of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection may mainly be attributed, and it is true also that there was in him much less of the Churchman, less reverence for tradition and precedents, as well as less disposition to put trust in sacraments, than in his great coadjutor, Wesley. When the latter founded the great society which bears his name, he necessarily drew off from the Established Church his immediate disciples. But Whitefield always maintained an intimate friendship with the best of the clergy, and they acknowledged their indebtedness to him. Newton was his convert, and Venn was not only his friend, but had such profound respect for him that he did not hesitate to offend the prejudices of his order by preaching in the Tabernacle the funeral sermon of one who had virtually become a Dissenter, who was, in fact, the most powerful Dissenter of his day. The place of Whitefield in the Evangelical succession is thus fixed by the late Sir James Stephen, than whom no man was more fitted to form a dispassionate view :—"It has been shown that Newton was the disciple of Whitefield, and that Scott was the disciple of Newton, and that Milner was his imitator. And it would be easy to show that Venn lived in a long and friendly intercourse with the great Itinerant, and officiated with him in places of public worship which rejected episcopal control."

To the devotees of ecclesiastical system, who carry the narrow and short-sighted spirit of sectarianism into a Church which claims to be catholic and national, it must be humiliating to feel that the salvation of the Anglican Church was due in the first instance to the influence of men who were forced out of her communion. In the eyes of a large party of the Church, Evangelicalism has always had upon it the taint of a Dissenting origin. But such a view of it is in reality unwarranted. Dissent did not produce the Evangelical movement; but the Evangelical movement, for reasons which will be considered hereafter, greatly multiplied the force of Dissent. Whitefield occupies the extraordinary and paradoxical position of having contributed more largely than any single man (with the exception of Wesley) to the quickening of two forces which have so often been, and still remain, antagonists, but between which there must nevertheless be a deep latent sympathy.

Without saying that he was in any sense the parent of modern Dissent, no one can doubt that he was one of the most potent influences in the resurrection of its spiritual energy, while as to the Anglican Church, we have the testimony of a witness as philosophical in temper as he was free from strong party bias on either side to the fact that "the first generation of the clergy designated as Evangelical were the second founders of the Church of England," and that Whitefield was the real founder of the school to which they belonged, the spiritual teacher and guide by whom its leading members were chiefly affected.

The whole story is one of the most striking illustrations of that truth which men are so unwilling to receive, but of which every great movement in the Church fur-

nishes new confirmation, that God ever chooses the wea things of the world. As the Reformation found its grea leader, not in a distinguished scholar like Erasmus, or i a great prelate such as Wolsey, or others who dabble with Church reforms, whilst they had neither will nc power to lay the axe to the root of the tree, but in th cloisters of a German monastery and in the person of a obscure monk; so here, the Anglican Church, which wa rapidly decaying under the influence of Erastian dignita ries, was saved by the intense faith, the impassioned zea and the devoted labours of a few humble clergyme whose names are redeemed from obscurity entirely b the service they rendered to this great movement. The brought to it nothing but great spiritual qualities, an these were made mighty of God. Popular movements, i truth, seldom spring from the noble or privileged classe Even the great Popish reaction which followed th first successes of the Reformation and produced tha Jesuistry which has proved the most powerful agen ever invented for crushing the liberty of the heart an corrupting the simplicity of conscience, was not due t any of the princes of the Church, but to the peniten knight who brought to the service of the cause which h had adopted the fiery passion of a devotee.

This further point of analogy, too, may be trace between the great Jesuit and some of the leading Re vivalists of the eighteenth century — they were alik animated by an overwhelming sense of the wonde which had been wrought in and for themselves. White field and Newton in particular had their sense of th preciousness of the gospel enhanced by the feelin which never forsook them, that by it they had them selves been rescued from eternal death. The sam

intense feeling of gratitude for their own deliverance, of compassion for those who were still exposed to the same perils, inspired the Jesuits and the Evangelicals. They worked by different means, and to some extent sought different ends, but equally they teach how much is possible to an intensity begotten by a realizing sense of the awfulness of eternal death and the greatness of the salvation wrought by Christ.

IV.

It was fortunate for the Anglican Church that the apostles of this new movement were men who thus sprang from the humbler ranks of the clergy. An Evangelical party headed by some dignitary, and including in its ranks any considerable number of supporters, would have had but little chance of existence. Imagine a school of thinkers, like those who in later days gathered at Oxford and laid the foundation of the Tractarian movement, combining in the middle of the last century for the purpose of an Evangelical Revival; what possible hope could they have had of success? The methods which the Tractarians adopted would have been of comparatively little use to them. They might have published tracts, but they would have excited little attention, except from those who would have seen in them symptoms of Puritan reaction, and at once have set themselves to crush it in the germ. The great aim of Sheldon and his coadjutors in 1662 was to purge the Church of England of clergymen with the theology of Thomas Scott and the passionate earnestness of John Newton. These men, all unconscious of any disloyalty to obligations which they had contracted, or of dis-

obedience to the law to which they were bound to render submission, had really set themselves to undo the work which the Act of Uniformity had accomplished. They were the successors of the Nonconformists of whose piety and zeal that fatal Bartholomew's day had deprived the Establishment. If this had been clear to themselves, they might have hesitated, and if it had been detected by the then rulers of the Church, the action of these new Puritans would at once have been arrested by the strong hand of the law. Ever since the Evangelical party has become a power, we have been told that the Established Church was intended to include it as well as its High Church rivals. It is strange if an Act which expelled Baxter was designed to include John Newton. Sheldon himself, who declared that if the door was not strait enough he would make it straiter, would certainly have been surprised if such a view of the Church had been suggested to him. Sheldon's successors might not have been more tolerant than himself if they had had to deal with a party seeking to restore the old Puritanism within the Church.

There was no such purpose. Happily for themselves the Evangelical leaders of the Church did not trouble themselves about such points. They loved their Church, and they loved the simple truths of the gospel, and they did not stop to consider whether there was any opposition between the formularies of the one and the doctrines of the other. Their hearts were full of Christ and His salvation, and out of the fulness of their hearts their mouths spake. Of party organization they had no thought; and had the possibility of their labours resulting in the creation of a new party occurred to them, they might have shrunk from such an issue. But the party

grew, nevertheless, and it was able to assert itself and obtain a solid footing before its full possibilities were discovered. There was nothing that could be called an Evangelical party for at least a century after the Act of Uniformity. For a time the few men of Puritan sympathy who had accepted the conditions of the Act preserved the tradition of the days when Puritanism was yet struggling for ascendancy within the National Church. But they died out; and if they had any successors, they were so few and obscure as not to attract notice. Not till Wesley and Whitefield arose, to be followed by Newton, Venn, Scott, and Milner, and still later by Simeon and others, was there an Evangelical school. They were able to keep their place because so much popular sympathy had been aroused on their behalf, that it would have been simply impossible to dispossess men who had done so much to lift England out of the slough of wickedness into which the formalism of a former generation had plunged her. The mighty success of the preaching placed their position beyond the possibility of assault.

Up to the time of the Gorham suit the right of the Evangelicals was never challenged, and then it was too late to interfere with it. What might have been the result if, at an earlier period, some prelate had anticipated the action of Henry of Exeter, it is impossible to conjecture. The decision in the case of Mr. Gorham was eminently satisfactory to those who would save the Establishment by comprehending in it all who are willing to accept comprehension, but hardly to any who feel the importance of the questions at stake. It was a decision which decided nothing, except that it was not expedient to expel a party so powerful as the Evan-

gelicals had become. But it introduced a new principle into the interpretation of the formularies of the Church, a principle in virtue of which any form of opinion may be tolerated as long as it is supported by a party so formidable as to make their disaffection or secession a peril to the Establishment. It is safe to say that no such principle would have been introduced for the salvation of the Evangelicals, had the attack been made in earlier days, and when they were yet few and feeble. They had grown up from very small beginnings. Their first leaders had neither the power nor the desire to play a prominent part in ecclesiastical affairs. They were despised for their fanaticism; but there was nothing in their action to alarm those who did not share their fervour. Those were not the times of synods and conferences, of rival associations and active agitations, of great demonstrations and important lawsuits. The conflict of Church parties was of much later date. If it had begun then it is very doubtful whether men like Venn or Newton, Romaine or Simeon, would have cared to engage in it. Perhaps Simeon realized more fully the necessity of united and organized action, but it was only with the view of securing a number of evangelists and preachers in important centres of population. Happily for their country and for themselves, the thoughts of these earlier Evangelical leaders were not distracted from the one work to which they had consecrated themselves by discussions of Church Congresses, the wranglings of ecclesiastical courts, or the enticements of ecclesiastical ambition.

V.

Their strength was due greatly to this unity of aim and of method. They lived to save souls, and to save souls by preaching. Great preachers, in the scholar's sense of the term, they were not, with the solitary exception of Whitefield, if indeed he is to be regarded as an exception. It would be absurd to deny him the title in face of the fact that, though moving in a very limited circle of ideas, and dealing with what might be supposed to be familiar themes, he contrived, by the force of his own genius and earnestness, to clothe them with such freshness and force, that his sermons moved not only uncultured minds, that easily lent themselves to the play of enthusiasm in the speaker, but cold sceptics like Hume, clear-headed and unimpressible politicians like Franklin, frivolous votaries of fashion like Chesterfield. Still, there is little in the sermons as we read them now that helps us to understand their effects; nothing that would entitle the preacher to be placed in the same category as Barrow or Jeremy Taylor, Owen or Howe, or such preachers of our own generation as Archer Butler or Frederick Robertson. But if a work is to be judged by its results, he was a far greater preacher than any of them. He moved men as English preacher never has moved them, and it would be mere pedantic affectation to question his right to take a foremost place among greater preachers, because his permanent contributions to theological literature have been small, and because his success was won not so much by the matter of his sermons as by that personal intensity which was breathed into them all.

But there is not another of the saintly group who can claim the title. Newton was plain, practical, and forceful; Berridge, quaint, eccentric, and striking; Venn, lively, impressive, and moving; Romaine, learned, devout, and spiritual; Grimshaw had an extraordinary facility for speaking to the people in their native Doric without ever falling below the greatness of his subject; Simeon had a marvellous power of method and arrangement which gave him a singular felicity in the exposition of doctrine. But it is not probable that the sermons of any of them, judged by any other test save that of practical efficiency, would secure any special mark of distinction. What the Bishop of Liverpool says of Venn's sermons would apply more or less to all of them: "There is nothing striking, brilliant, or powerful about them. There is nothing that appears likely to lay hold of men's minds, to arrest or to keep their attention. In short, you find it hard to believe that the man who preached these sermons could ever have been a great preacher." The truth is, their greatness lay solely in their power to stir men's souls, and in this they were supreme.

They owed it very largely to the fact that they had themselves deep experience of the power and joy of that salvation which they preached to others. Not from the calm and quiet paths of spiritual indifference had they been drawn by gentle influences to a lowly and loving trust in Christ, which had grown up so gradually that they could hardly trace its genesis. The conflict varied in character; some of them, like Scott the commentator, having to contend against intellectual difficulties; while Whitefield and John Newton had had such bitter experience of the seducing and debasing power of sin that they ever regarded themselves as brands snatched from the

everlasting burnings. Whitefield was still but a youth when, to use the language of Paul, he was laid hold of by Jesus Christ. But the previous struggle, if brief, had been intensely keen. The hot passions of youth, fed by evil associations, fought against the nobler instincts of his heart. Efforts after a better life were fitful and often followed by violent reactions. Times of self-indulgence and remorseful repentance alternated, and a victory over some besetting sin was followed by a lapse into evil. The experiences of many a soul struggling into liberty and light were, in his case, repeated with a vividness and intensity proportioned to the strength of his nature, until at length the frivolous youth, whose goodness had been as the early cloud and the morning dew, was converted into the living disciple and the mighty preacher of that gospel of whose saving power he was himself so distinguished an example.

John Newton's was a still more striking case. A swearing sailor and a profligate slave-trader turned into a devoted minister of Christ was little short of a miracle; was, if looked at fairly, as great a wonder in the spiritual world as the raising of the dead in the physical. Men with such experiences as these preached with irresistible force. They could not but be fervid in feeling and impassioned in utterance. They had realized the full meaning of the terrors of the Lord, for they had looked into the hell which seemed ready to receive them, and whose fires had, indeed, been kindled in their hearts. They could not speak in calm, measured accents of a Saviour who delivered them from such agonies. Their souls were at the white heat of faith and love. So they spoke, and so men believed.

VI.

What was to them a mighty power has been a source of weakness to the party which claims them as its founders, They cannot with truth be said to have had a theology. They had neither opportunity nor disposition, even if they had possessed the necessary learning, for establishing a "school of thought." Such schools are not founded amid the passionate excitement of a revival such as that which then swept across England, nor by men who wield the electric force by which these awakenings of a nation are produced. It is too common to ignore the "diversities of operations" by which the same Lord "worketh all and in all," and to suppose that the preacher who is mighty in the pulpit should also be the theologian acute and learned in the study. Such combinations are not frequent. They were certainly not found in the men of the revival. It had no one who in any true sense of the term can be called either a great divine or an ecclesiastical statesman. It is, of course, only of those who remained in the Anglican Church that this is true. Wesley was one of the most remarkable statesmen ever found in the Christian ministry. He has sometimes been compared to Hildebrand, but he had more of the genius of Richelieu, of course with the difference produced by the sanctifying power of God's grace. Wesley also had a theology, which is more than can be said of the fathers of the Evangelical party.

The literature which they produced was not extensive, and such as it was it was mainly practical. This is not said with any view of depreciating their work. A party whose leaders produced books which have had such an

influence as Scott's *Force of Truth*, John Newton's Autobiography, and Wilberforce's *Practical View of Godliness*, need not be discomfited by the thought that they have added so little to the enormous pile of literature, by which theology has perplexed the world with subtle controversies, and not unfrequently darkened the counsel of God by words without knowledge. But the fact is there, and it has exercised no little influence on the position of the party. Thomas Scott's commentary may be cited in opposition, but its testimony would be wholly in favour of the view. It is a book which has been productive of more good than many a theological treatise, but it is itself valuable rather as a guide to a devout and spiritual life than as an exposition of theology. Sir James Stephen has said that it would not be "easy to form for any student of the Bible a better wish than that he might drink so deeply of Mr. Scott's spirit as to lose the power of perceiving his defects and the disposition to censure them." The characterization of what he calls "this vast Biblical thesaurus, the greatest theological performance of our age and country," is perfect, but it teaches us to find its merits not in its scientific character, but in its spiritual force and beauty. "Thomas Scott, the comparatively unlearned, the positively unskilful, and the superlatively unamusing commentator, has descended further into the meaning of the sacred oracles, and has been baptized more copiously into their spirit than the most animated and ingenious and accomplished of his competitors."[1] Higher praise no earnest Christian could desire to have, and it is as discriminating and just as it is high. But it does not at

[1] "The Evangelical Succession." *Essays on Ecclesiastical Biography.* By Sir James Stephen, p. 429. 1868.

all touch the point that his commentary, admirable as an instrument of spiritual culture, does not supply the foundation for the new school which was rising up in the Anglican Church.

Sir James Stephen has in a sentence defined the characteristic of the early Evangelicals. Referring to Milner's attempt to discriminate between the orthodox and the Evangelicals, "two appellations so equivocal in themselves, so tossed about by party spirit, and so continually shifting in their use," he adds, "The knot would perhaps have been best cut by defining an orthodox clergyman as one who held, in dull and barren formality, the very same doctrines which the Evangelical clergymen held in cordial and prolific vitality, or by saying that they differed from each other as solemn triflers from the profoundly serious." In other words, the difference was one of soul rather than of intellect. They subscribed the same creeds, and the spiritual barrenness of the eighteenth century proves, in addition to the points already indicated, how useless are the defences constructed by formal creeds when the men who fight behind them are not at heart loyal to the truth. The difference consisted "in the degree in which they were combined with that *caloric*—the vital heat of the soul itself—which quickens into animating motives the otherwise inert and torpid mass of doctrinal opinions."

The reason why so much prominence has been given to this point will be apparent afterwards. Let it suffice for the present to observe that when there comes to be a real distinction of parties, and of parties seeking Church position, and exercising a permanent influence on the public mind, there must be a greater difference than this. Possessed with apostolic zeal, these Evangelicals went

directly to the object in view, and did not stop to consider their position as churchmen. They found, as they believed, the doctrines so precious to them in the Articles, and for the time the world was stormed by their enthusiasm. But when the fervour of early feelings had abated, when others with more mixed motives entered into their labours, when ecclesiastical considerations of a more worldly character began to affect them, there arose a necessity for a clearer definition of their position, and the deficiency became apparent. An access of devout feeling can make a revival, but it cannot lay the foundation of a great ecclesiastical party.

But this was a point that did not arrest attention in the first days of the great movement. Then it was only the practical good which the revival accomplished and the spiritual enthusiasm by which it was inspired that stood out conspicuously. Those who recognized its effect on the character of the nation and on the good of humanity rejoiced in these results, without any thought of its ultimate bearing on the fortunes of the Church Establishment.

VII.

Sydney Smith scornfully branded men whose spirit he could not understand, and whose work he did not appreciate, with a name which he meant to be expressive of contempt. But the sneer of the cynic has died away, whereas the work of the noble company he despised survives and grows. Like such titles as "Les gueux," or Methodists, or even the highest name of all, Christians, originally flung out as insults at the party on whom they were branded, it has become, in virtue of the deeds

associated with it, a title of honour rather than a badge of reproach. A company in which were included the men who helped to found the Bible Society, to enlarge and support the operations of the Church Missionary Society, and to emancipate the slave; which was composed of men like Zachary Macaulay, John Thornton, Lord Teignmouth, the Grants, and William Wilberforce, which had for its bond the one principle of love to God, and for its object the work of Christian philanthropy, may be called a sect, and may long have been everywhere spoken against, but it exerted an influence as widespread as it was useful, elevating, and noble, and has left behind it a memory which ought to silence all its detractors.

These laymen did hardly less for the promotion of the Evangelical party than did their clerical leaders. They gave an exhibition of its principles and action which impressed the people. They contributed munificently to its funds, and thus helped the extension of its influence; in some cases educating men for its ministry, and largely helping to support evangelistic agencies both at home and abroad. The contrast between them and the clerically minded laymen, who under recent influences have become prominent as leaders amongst the laity, is very striking. The latter are so intent upon the outward framework of the Church that they too often lose sight of its spiritual mission and of the practical methods by which this is to be fulfilled. The attention which is now given to elaborate architecture, chancel decorations, or embroidered altar-cloths, was given by these noble-minded men to the working out of the practical principles of the gospel in the redress of wrong, the comforting of sorrow, or the reclaiming of ignorance and vice. While the one

are intent upon the exaltation of the Church, the other sought only the glory of Christ in the conflict against human evil and the increase of human happiness. Whatever judgment may be formed of the theology or the Churchmanship of such men, their eminent services to the cause of Christian truth and philanthropy could not fail to be a tower of strength to any party and to any Church. They, as well as their clerical friends, recognized that the true policy of Evangelicals lay in co-operation with men who, though they were not of their Church, had a vital spiritual agreement with them which they did not find in many of their own brethren. They were not ashamed of the association of Dissenters, because, like the apostle, they were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. The foundation of the Bible Society was one of their great works, and there certainly is none that redounds more to their honour. Noble as it is, in the object which it contemplates, and in the influence which it exerts wherever it goes, it was hardly less noble as a true exhibition of Christian unity. To bring the Word of God within the reach of every peasant and workman in England was a service which might have satisfied the ambition of the most large-hearted Christian. But the men who laid the foundations of the society have done far more than this. That society has translated the Divine record into the languages and dialects not only of great nations, but even of sparse and scattered tribes. It has taken the Word of God into the palace of the prince and the wigwam of the savage; to the nomads of the prairies and the masses of the crowded cities; to the reckless gold-workers in Australian diggings, and the superstitious devotees of old idolatries in China and in India. Wherever there is special work to be done in the

comforting of the bereaved, or the instruction of the ignorant, or among promiscuous bodies of men collected together for the great enterprises either of peace or of war, there is the agent of the Bible Society to be found. On the battle-field or among the navvies' huts ; in the camp or in the hospital ; in fact, on every continent and in almost every land are to be found the fruits of that noble work, the beginnings of which were laid by that Clapham sect which represents the laity of the Evangelical Revival.

The cause of justice and liberty owes that little company almost as great a debt. They did not give much heed to the measures of political progress which interest the hearts of English Liberals, but their souls were profoundly stirred by the wrongs done in the name of their country to African slaves. Trained for the most part in those Conservative principles which are in harmony both with the spirit and with the traditions of the Anglican Church, they attached little if any importance to the inequalities of representation, or even to the restrictions put upon conscience by the civil disabilities imposed on Roman Catholics and Dissenters. And, in truth, when the heart of a man became possessed with the thought of millions held in a slavery which was a wanton outrage upon the first laws of God as well as upon the rights of man, it is not wonderful that he should think comparatively little of the injustice inflicted upon his own fellow-citizens by their want of the political franchise, or by grievances which, however real, might seem sentimental in the presence of the enormous wrongs which the fettered negro had to endure. At all events, the redress of the latter certainly claimed their first attention. And

many an error that they may have committed may well be condoned in recollection of the fact that in those quiet homes on Clapham Common the forces were created and fostered by which the conscience of England was at length stirred to the noblest deed of justice and humanity that is to be found in the records of any nation. The school which trained the men to whom eight hundred thousand slaves owed their emancipation from bondage, has by that act alone laid England and the world under lasting obligation.

In fine, their broad sympathies with human suffering and sorrow, the munificent liberality with which they gave to the work of Christian missions, their labours in the cause of education, their noble efforts for the emancipation of the slave, have given this little company of true and noble men a distinction more to be envied than that which falls to the lot of victorious generals or eminent statesmen.

Foremost among them stands William Wilberforce, the true type of the Evangelical politician, since he was a man who made his politics bend to his religion, instead of accommodating his religion to his politics. William Pitt had no truer friend or more loyal follower than that noble-minded man, "in bodily presence weak," who on a day that has become historic presented himself in the Guildhall at York, and by his persuasive eloquence succeeded in turning the current of popular feeling, and in securing the verdict of that great county in favour of his chief. But when the choice was between Pitt and morality, Pitt and righteousness, Pitt and official purity, as in the memorable case of Lord Melville, and on more than one other occasion, Wilberforce obeyed conscience in opposition alike to the voice of party interest and

personal friendship. It was not his habit to hurl anathemas against evils he did nothing to oppose, to forsake the guidance of Christian principle which led him outside the lines of his party obligations, or, in short, to subordinate his own convictions of the right to considerations which, however disguised under specious pleas of care for higher interests, meant the preference of some object of the hour, which were of the things seen and temporal, to those great principles which are unseen but eternal. This judgment must, in fairness, be pronounced upon his course of action, whatever we may think of the attitude he took upon particular questions.

Like the Evangelicals of later times, he lacked that unswerving faith in truth which would have led him courageously to dispense with those legal securities which the State had erected for its defence, and to trust to God alone for its vindication. Liberal instincts and sympathies, indeed, were continually coming into conflict with the conservative tendencies which his training and associations had fostered, and the latter generally gained the victory. This was the case in relation to ecclesiastical questions, and the man who spent a great part of his life in a noble effort to free the negro from bondage even voted for the perpetuation of a wrong to the Roman Catholics of Ireland and the Protestant Dissenters of England. But however inconsistent and erroneous such conduct may have been, it was undoubtedly taken from conscientious motives.

Had Wilberforce, who exerted great influence, taken a more liberal view of politics, it might have produced an effect upon the party in general that would have given it a stronger position in the country to-day. The natural affinities of earnest Protestants must surely be with

Liberalism, and their proper place in the ranks of the army of progress. But from the first the Evangelicals of the Anglican Church have more or less identified themselves with Conservatism, until, in our own day, they have been found among the most ardent defenders of a tricky imperialism, and have eagerly adduced the predictions of sacred Scripture on its behalf. How far a different tone might have been given had their first leader among the laity, as Wilberforce unquestionably was, identified himself with Liberal principles, it is useless to conjecture. In his political action there was at all events a conscientious independence and an elevation above the character of the mere partisan which, unhappily, has not always been seen in the members of his school. For the most part the Evangelicals, clergy and laity alike, have regarded the liberal and progressive tendencies of the age with an alarm scarcely less disquieting than that of the Ultramontane himself.

"Work done for God it dieth not," and that noblest title to remembrance certainly belongs to the Clapham sect, and pre-eminently to Wilberforce as its leader. His book on *Practical Christianity* reflected a higher lustre on his name than any of his purely political achievements, and his development of its principles in his private and public life was far grander than the book. One who himself belonged to the inner circle of fashion, who was the intimate of leading statesmen, and a favourite in society, bore his testimony on behalf of the gospel to a scoffing age by whom it was largely denied as a creed, and still more widely ignored as a rule of conduct. As a literary production, his treatise is not remarkable for profundity of thought or brilliancy of style. There is in it no sign of genius and no pretence to originality.

But it achieved an unexpected popularity and exercised an extraordinary power, and one reason of it was that behind it was the life of the man. Sydney Smith sneers at him as "the head of the Clapham Church," but happy would it have been for the Church of England if its canonries and other high offices of the time had been filled by men of a spirit like that of this despised sect.

The works of the Clapham sect redound to the credit of the Evangelical party, and will ever be an evidence of its happy influence in the nation. It has had its faults, and grievously has it answered them. It had glorious opportunities which it failed adequately to improve, and its failure has told to the hindering of the gospel with which it identified itself both in name and work. Its signal virtues were marred by serious errors—some of exaggeration and some of defect. But its merits ought never to be overlooked by the Church which it has loved and served with a devotion that has been the cause of many of its mistakes, by the nation which it saved from the evil which the spirit of the French Revolution might otherwise have wrought in this country, and by the friends of true religion, who feel that the work of these devoted and godly men has given a new and impressive proof of the enduring vitality of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

LECTURE IV.

THE OXFORD SCHOOL.

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THERE are few, if any, parallels in history to the extreme changes which have passed over the spirit and teaching of the Anglican Church within the last century. The form and outward aspect remain unaltered. A modification in the terms of subscription appears to have done something, the exact value of which disinterested critics are not able to perceive, for the relief of scrupulous clerical consciences; but the formularies to which all the ministers are required to give their consent are those which Sheldon devised, and by means of which Baxter and his noble associates were ejected from the Church. An "Act of Uniformity" still regulates and controls a Church, within whose circles are to be found the widest diversities of teaching and of ritual —from some who insist on every anathema of the Athanasian Creed down to others who would get rid of all creeds; from the stoutest defenders of "Catholicity" to Low Churchmen whose ecclesiastical practice is hardly to be distinguished from that of Plymouth Brethren; from the copyists of Romish worship, who have accustomed us to an Anglican service hardly to be distinguished from the Mass, to lovers of Puritan simplicity,

who are afraid to carry out the rubrics of their own Church.

In all this, things continue as they have been from the Restoration, except that each party in turn has developed its own idea, and that the consequent differences are more accentuated to-day than at any previous period. The successive phases of Church life which the century has witnessed are due to this cause. At the beginning of the century the Evangelical party were making steady advances, and in its second quarter they attained the highest position they have ever reached. The period of political supremacy, when the appointment of bishops was virtually in the hands of the well-known leader of the Evangelical party, did not come till a little later, but decay of the spiritual force had begun before the access of political influence, and the consequent improvement of its Church status, came to hasten the process. Another school had already begun to acquire popularity, and it hated all that Evangelicals most loved, and made it its chief business to restore all that Evangelicals had been most anxious to destroy. The Protestantism in which the one gloried was to the other a shame and reproach. The points of mediæval doctrine and worship which the former would fain have treated as excrescences on the reformed liturgy, only allowed to remain through oversight or weak concession on the part of the Reformers, the latter was determined to regard as its most precious and characteristic features.

There is no room for saying, in relation to the two parties which have played so conspicuous a part in the ecclesiastical history of the time, what Sir James Stephen, in the passage quoted in the last lecture, asserted as to the differences between the old "High Church" party

and the Evangelicals, that the views held by the opposing schools were essentially the same, and that they differed only as to the spirit in which they held them. Here are two antagonistic theories between which it is not possible to find any honest mode of reconciliation. There is a section of the Evangelical school which, if it has not approached more nearly to its rivals, has certainly learned to speak of them and their views with more tolerance, and has even gone so far as to confess that for all except the extreme members of the party there must be a place in the national Church. But this position is due to the hard pressure of necessity, and could not easily be shown to be logical. The concession is made to the great historic High Church party with the hope that the two centres might unite. But the expectation has proved more illusive in ecclesiastical than even in secular politics, and, in fact, it is the Ritualists who have profited by this melancholy lack both of sagacity and principle. The unfortunate result of these cravings after an impossible compromise has been the corrupting of Evangelical simplicity, and the enfeebling of that Evangelical force so urgently needed for the stern conflicts of the time. The advantage remains with the extreme party, which knows its mind, which is as tenacious in its purpose as it is clear in its perceptions, and which has in its favour so much in the express language of the Prayer Book, and even more in the undoubted service which it has been able to render to the Church.

In little more than a hundred years, then, the Anglican Church has presented at least three distinct phases. First, it was the Church of Tillotson ; later it gave promise of becoming a Church such as might have satisfied

Leighton; to-day, considerable advance has been made to the ideal of Laud. A century ago it was still under the sway of a "High and dry" school, whose deficiencies were hardly repaired by their rivals, irreverently described as "Low and slow." Fifty years later Evangelicalism had seated itself on the Primate's throne, and a little later we had that administration of the Palmerston bishops, which seemed to mark the supremacy of the Evangelical party, but which tended rather to paralyze its true strength. To-day the party in which are found spirit, audacity, and courage is the party which hates the Reformation, abjures the Protestant name, and reviles the Protestant heroes of the Anglican Church, which boldly claims the position and revenues of the National Church as its private estate in right of its "Catholic" succession, and which is engaged in a resolute crusade for asserting the supremacy of the Church over the State, or, at least, an independence which shall render the control of Parliament over all ecclesiastical matters little more than a name. The outward changes which this last party has wrought in the worship of the churches where it has control are so striking that a stranger revisiting England, after an absence of twenty years, would fail to recognize in one of the shrines of this new cult a sanctuary of the Established Church. But the alteration in spirit is even greater. It may not be so extensive as the strong utterances of its representatives would lead us to suppose, and it is certain that it has provoked a decided opposing sentiment which, for the time, may not be so demonstrative in expression, but which is deep and only bides its time in order to make itself felt. It may even be that the force which at present appears to be telling so power-

fully on behalf of the Establishment, and is on that account alone viewed with favour by Erastians, may ultimately prove the instrument of its destruction. But for the present, the "Catholic" temper is in the ascendant among the clergy and laymen of a clerical temper. Beyond the confines of the school itself a higher Church sentiment has come to prevail, and as the former generation of Evangelicals passes away and another takes its place this will be still more fully developed.

That this change should have been carried so far in England, and in an age like the present, seems at the first view altogether incomprehensible. The Archbishop of Canterbury only said what a thousand facts might be cited to confirm, and what must be confirmed by every thoughtful observer, when he expressed his conviction that "the current of popular opinion throughout the world is all in the opposite direction from superstition; and I have great fear lest in the long run the faith of our Church and country may suffer far more by abstraction from than addition to its approved system of Christian doctrine."[1] Yet the fact is undoubted that, in the country of free thought, and in an age which resents every kind of restraint, and with fearless daring insists on forcing its way into the very Holy of Holies, and challenging its most sacred mysteries, there is in the National Church this extraordinary development of sacerdotal and sacramentarian teaching. The priest, it might be supposed, would be treated as an anachronism in nineteenth century England, with its spirit of resolute independence, with the inherited traditions of liberty to which it clings with fond patriotic pride, with its speculative philosophy,

[1] *Church of the Future*, p. 89.

with those marvellous achievements of science which, with a little pardonable exaggeration, may be said to have brought a new world under the dominion of man; and, above all, with that liberal Protestantism which never understood its principles better or was prepared to apply them more trenchantly. That the priest would cease to exist, even under such a condition of things so unfriendly to his power, was too much to anticipate; but it might have been hoped that his sway would have been restricted to the Church which is his proper home, and whose powerful machinery is all employed for the strengthening and extension of his influence. But, on the contrary, he has a position in the Anglican Church such as he has never held since the time when the first Prayer Book of Edward VI. marked the place which the timid reformers of the day would have left him, except in the brief period of that wild attempt of Laud to establish a hierarchy, which speedily brought about a revolution that involved mitre and crown in a common disaster. He claims to-day rights and functions which, as has been proved by the ablest divines of the Romish Church, his predecessors never ventured to assume.

The only effect of the liberal spirit of the age on him is to make him more arrogant, more extreme in his pretensions, more exclusive in his claims. He breathes something of the independent and daring spirit of the times, but in him it exhibits itself in a defiance of principles of liberty and toleration supposed to be accepted, and in the revival of pretensions which it was thought had been exploded by their own absurdity. He scoffs at the victories of freedom, and reviles those who have been esteemed its martyrs and heroes. He gives us

new readings of history, and requires us to reverse our verdict alike upon its characters and its events. Under his guidance the current of religious feeling is turned back. Mediæval saints are the models to which Christians are urged to conform themselves. The Church takes the place of the Bible, and it is well if the priest himself does not hide Christ from the eye of the soul. The name of Christ is, indeed, pronounced with honour, and if external signs of reverence could compensate for the lack of clear conceptions of His work, the result might well be satisfactory. But while there is scrupulous care bestowed upon the form of worship, the Saviour bears a different aspect from that in which He appears in the simple proclamation of apostolic preaching, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Christ approached with overwhelming awe, which makes long and trying preparation for an approach to Him, Christ with His will interpreted, and the access to Him guarded by priests, Christ materialized into the idol of a sacrament, and served by fastings and bodily exercise, is not the Christ whom Paul preached, and in whom the men He gathered into the early Church believed. But it is the Christ whom modern sacerdotalism exhibits, and, strange to say, in this era of progress, there are numbers who have submitted themselves to its rule, and who would, if it were in their power, entangle others in the yoke of bondage.

I.

A phenomenon so anomalous may be explained partly on the principle of reaction. As the Reformation was followed by the establishment of the Jesuit order,

and the extraordinary Romish revival which it produced, as the dreamy Erastianism of the Hanoverian period was succeeded by the most wonderful outburst of spiritual enthusiasm by which the Church of England has ever been blessed, as Ultramontanism was the recoil from the infidel teaching of the French Revolution, so the mediæval reaction, which first bore the name of Tractarianism, and in its more recent developments is known as Ritualism, is the product partly of the extreme simplicity and essential Puritanism of the Evangelical movement, and partly of the aggressive Liberalism which made itself felt forty years ago.

The Ultramontane wave, which had spread over a large part of Europe, unquestionably affected this country to some extent, and the first result of its operation was to intensify the Church feeling of a party young, numerically small, apparently possessed of little influence, but including some men of saintly temper and of great capacity, and one in particular, who towered high above his compeers. At the beginning of a movement the ultimate development of which the most far-sighted could not have forecast, there was certainly no sympathy with Rome, and no thought of subserving her purposes. The early leaders were so far from any sentiment of the kind that one of the first influences by which Cardinal Newman was affected was a bitter resentment at the granting of Catholic Emancipation. So little disposition had he to recognize the claims of Rome that Canon Oakely, in speaking of the ignorance about English Romanists which prevailed among his friends, tells us: "I did not myself know the Rev. W. Newsham, the priest at Oxford, even by sight, when in the year 1845 he received me into the Church. The only one

among those who took part in the Tractarian movement, to whom that worthy priest was personally known, was Mr. Newman, who, on being appointed to the parish of St. Clement's, in which the Catholic chapel of Oxford was situated, laid claim (I have heard) to him as one of his parishioners. If this story be true, the tables ought to have been reversed, and were so twenty years later." [1] But while the leaders regarded Roman Catholics in the same light as other Dissenters, and asserted their own exclusive prerogatives with absolute impartiality towards all, it is not less certain that the so-called Catholic revival of the continent had an indirect effect upon them. The same influences which made Montalembert an earnest devotee, and Lacordaire an eloquent apostle of the Romish Church, roused in the hearts of Newman and Pusey and Keble a spirit which made them undertake a crusade with a view of repairing the wrongs which the Anglican Church had suffered at the hands of various tormentors, from the Reformers down to the Liberals, who had forced on the removal of religious disabilities, and who, growing bold with success, had ventured on still more daring iniquities in the appointment of an Ecclesiastical Commission, and the abolition of sinecures in England, and of bishoprics which were even worse than sinecures in Ireland.

The political feeling is put forward prominently by themselves as one principal cause of the movement. When in 1829 Newman, in consequence of his opposition to Sir Robert Peel's re-election, broke off his friendship with Whately, the future Archbishop of Dublin, he says that he took this action against Peel

[1] *Historical Notes on the Tractarian Movement.* By Frederick Oakely, p. 37.

on "an academical, not at all on an ecclesiastical or a political ground," because he felt that "a great university ought not to be bullied even by a great Duke of Wellington;" but he adds: "By this time I was under the influence of Keble and Froude, who, in addition to the reasons I have given, disliked the Duke's change of policy as dictated by Liberalism." This influence grew very rapidly, so that in a year or two we find him possessed by a mingled dread and hatred of this Liberalism whose reforming energies were troubling old abuses and vested interests everywhere.

"The Whigs had come into power. Lord Grey had told the bishops to set their house in order, and some of the prelates had been insulted and threatened in the streets of London. The vital question was, How were we to keep the Church from being liberalized? There was such apathy on the subject in some quarters, such imbecile alarm in others; the true principles of Churchmanship seemed so radically decayed, and there was such distraction in the councils of the clergy."[1]

II.

Here is a suggestion as to one active cause of an awakening of mind which was afterwards to produce such fruits. The Church was in peril because there was on every side an unfaithfulness to the principles on which the Church was founded. Some treated what the ardent and devout young thinker regarded as a Divine institution as though it were nothing better than an Erastian creation of statesmen. The Evangelicals had

[1] *Historical Notes on the Tractarian Movement.* By Frederick Oakely, p. 30.

done much for religion, but nothing for the Church as he understood the Church. "I thought little of the Evangelicals as a class. I thought they played into the hands of the Liberals." The charge is one of the last which could be sustained against the Evangelicals. They hate Liberalism only less than Romanism, which they regard as its natural ally. Whether it be developed in politics, or literature, or religion, it is everywhere distasteful to them. It seems cruel to charge them with playing into the hands of a party they have always opposed. Yet in the sense in which it is made the accusation is true. The Evangelicals had so far undermined what Churchmen would esteem "sound Church principles" as to promote, however undesignedly, the advance of true Liberalism, that is, of that recognition of the rights of the individual which is fatal to the claims of authority, whether in the Catholic rule of the Church or the Erastian assumptions of the State. They were not Liberals themselves, but, on the contrary, were for the most part as much alarmed at the aggressions of free thought, as anxious to preserve intact all the securities for national orthodoxy, as distrustful of the spirit of progress, and as eager to restrain its friends, as the most inveterate champions of the past. But they were Protestants—albeit unable to perceive the full sweep of their own principles, and prepared to substitute another rule for that of an infallible Church—and their anti-Romish, and therefore anti-hierarchical, tendencies forced them into being reluctant, and indeed unconscious, helpers of the Liberal movement.

That they had done as much to multiply Dissenters as to revive the Church is a fact that is patent to all students of the period. In Huddersfield, where Venn

laboured with such signal success, his removal led to the formation of a Congregational Church, and the good man, with a Christianity which was stronger than his Churchmanship, did not hesitate to give it his countenance. What was done there with the sanction of the clergyman was done elsewhere without it, possibly in defiance of his opinion. The old bottles would not hold the new wine, and Dissenting communities reaped the benefit of the revived spiritual energy which the Church sought rather to restrain and check than to utilize. To some extent this result was independent of the action of the Evangelical preachers, and would have happened whatever course they had taken. But, to their honour be it told, many of them showed a noble liberality which could not but lead their followers to think more of spiritual affinities than of ecclesiastical relations. A recent High Church writer tells us that the Calvinistic clergy were guilty of the enormity of attending meeting-houses; that "Butt, vicar of Kidderminster and king's chaplain, habitually, in full canonicals, held the plate at the door of the Kidderminster meeting-house;" and that a Mr. Wills, knowing that he was to be followed in the curacy of St. Agnes, which he was resigning, by a clergyman of opposite views, sold his family plate to build a meeting-house. Had he lived in our times, and especially if his views had inclined to the opposite extreme, he might have adopted an expedient which would certainly have been less costly to himself and stimulated an agitation for congregational freedom within an Established Church.

Of course such facts as those cited are alleged as cause of reproach, and, from a High Churchman's point of

[1] *Church Quarterly Review*, vol. iv. p. 344.

view, justly so. These devoted Evangelicals were earnest Christians, but they were not sound Churchmen. Great injustice is done them by the writer when he taunts them with want of zeal for their Church, adding, "It is a sufficient condemnation of this powerful section of Churchmen to say that hardly a church had been built in London for seventy years, and that of its 1,129,000 souls, one million were unprovided for in the churches of the National Establishment."[1] The blame of this scandalous neglect rests upon the rulers, who at that time could have done pretty much what they would, not on any "powerful section of Churchmen." But we know not how the "seventy years" are to be reckoned to which this observation applies. There is no continuous period of seventy years during which the Evangelicals were really powerful for the kind of work for the lack of which they are reproached. But it is not necessary to defend them. Their works follow them, and it needs all the bitterness of "Catholic" bigotry to ask, as the High Churchman does, "Can there be a greater delusion than the popular notion that the Evangelicals revived the Church?" On this point it is unnecessary to add what was said in the last lecture. It is true, however, in relation to the Evangelical movement that "it had reanimated the old denominations; it had filled their chapels; it had supplied very largely their pulpits; and, in addition, it had called into existence a multitude of novel sects."[2] With the exception of the last phrase, which needs great qualification, this is true. What the writer does not perceive is that the strong tide of spiritual feeling which swept across the nation could not be confined within the narrow limits of any one Church, and here and there was

[1] *Church Quarterly Review*, vol. iv. p. 347. [2] Ibid. p. 353.

so strong that it burst all the old boundaries and worked out new channels for itself. Unless he is prepared to deny the existence of any good outside the pale of his own communion, the results which were thus produced in the country and the world might well lead him to doubt his own theory about the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, the only effect they have had upon the school he faithfully represents is to make them more severe in the condemnation of the Evangelicals, without whom it is very questionable whether they would have had a national Church left, and whose contributions to the increase of Dissent were due to the working of forces over which they had no real control. The conclusion which this writer reaches must be quoted in his own words—

"On the deplorable condition of the Church during the first decade of the nineteenth century all men are agreed, but as to the causes they differ. Weighing carefully all the facts advanced, will any impartial person deny that, great as were the evils of Walpole's tyranny, and those of the Arian school, with its deadening influence, the deepest and most incurable were due to the misdirected zeal and energy of the fathers of the Evangelical school, their utter ignorance of all that is meant by Church principles in general and of loyalty to the Anglican Church in particular." [1]

The implications in this sweeping allegation are certainly very startling. Better, according to this writer, have the Church paralyzed and benumbed, and, what is even worse, patron-ridden by a Minister, of whom we are told by the same critic that "his malice against the Church was displayed in small things as well as great;"

[1] *Church Quarterly Review*, vol. iv. pp. 354, 355.

better even the Arianism which robbed our Divine Lord of His honour, and Christianity of its vitalizing force, than an intense spiritual Evangelical preaching which did not understand Church principles or conserve Church interests. And this judgment, which would be laughed to scorn, where it did not awaken intense indignation, by all beyond a narrow ecclesiastical circle, is gravely propounded as one which every impartial person would ratify. More convincing proof could hardly be furnished of the blindness of the ecclesiastical partizan, but nothing could help us better to understand the feeling which led to the Tractarian movement. It is really what Newman means when he says that Evangelicals played into the hands of Liberals.

The acute thinker whose principles of Churchmanship were to lead him far beyond the Anglican lines deals more justly with the Evangelicals, whose influence he has done so much to weaken. He complained of the party in his day because, "with their late successes, they seemed to have lost that simplicity and unworldliness which I admired so much in Milner and Scott." Proceeding on the principle that whatever gift Wesley and Whitefield may have possessed they derived through the Church, and that therefore the Church owed nothing to them for any work they did, since they only rendered the service of a gift which the Church had been the instrument of bestowing, he still, writing in the earlier days of the Oxford movement, distinctly said, "we fully grant that they have been instruments in the hands of Providence of raising the standard and extending the influence of religion in the land." "The English Church," he says again, "*could not but have had* a revival, if it be a branch of the true Church; that Wesley and Whitefield

were the instruments of that revival (as far as they were such) was what may be called an accident of Providence, but that the Church should revive is an inspired promise from the beginning.[1] This is not a very gracious recognition of noble and permanent services, but it is better than to represent that service as an evil greater than Erastian corruption or Arian heresy. The contrast marks the difference between the first Tractarians, among whom were men with a wide sweep of intellectual vision, and the Ritualists or semi-Ritualists of to-day.

Both political and ecclesiastical motives inspired the movement, which first took shape in the publication of the celebrated Oxford Tracts. Writing of his own feelings on that memorable visit to the south of Europe, which immediately preceded his entrance upon a course of action destined to produce results of which neither he nor any of his coadjutors could have had an inkling, he says, "England was in my thoughts solely, and the news from England came rarely and imperfectly. The Bill for the suppression of the Irish Sees was in progress, and filled my mind. I had fierce thoughts against the Liberals. It was the success of the Liberal cause which fretted me inwardly. I became fierce against its instruments and its manifestations."[2] His great dread was that Liberalism might get a footing in the Church, because if once there, he felt it would be victorious. He turned away from the Evangelicals because he felt that, holding the principles of the Reformation, they were powerless. He was not attracted by the Papal Church, for even his visit to Rome had not produced a favourable impression on his mind. On the contrary, he tells us,

[1] *Essays Critical and Historical*, vol. i. pp. 422, 423.
[2] *History of my Religious Opinions*, pp. 32, 33.

"My general feeling was, All, save the spirit of man, is Divine." The explanation suggested in the narrative, written more than thirty years after, is, "Of the hidden life of Catholics I knew nothing." He did not falter in his loyalty to the Church of his fathers, or dream that he would ever be driven into exile from the religious home of his youth and early manhood by the resistless force of conviction. His one thought was there was need of a second reformation in order to bring England more into harmony with the "Church Catholic and Apostolic," which he felt was "something greater than the Established Church," which could at the utmost be only the "local presence and organ" of the universal Church.

III.

The idea of the catholicity of the Anglican Church was the key to their whole system, and it is just to say that it was not a novelty of their own invention. Mr. Gladstone's attempt to trace a distinct connection between the Oxford school and their great rivals, so that the "Evangelical movement" may have stood in the relation of parentage to the "Tractarian," came as a startling surprise to all except the few who had thought deeply on the subject. The most prominent facts seem to be all opposed to it. The Evangelical has a hatred of Rome which sometimes approaches to fanaticism, and is generally characterized by a narrowness which goes far to weaken the effect of its protest. The sentiment of the Tractarian was well expressed in the well-known verse of the poet of the school. The scarlet woman of the Evangelical is the "erring sister" of the Tracta-

rian. Antagonism could not well be more complete than this.

Looking, however, to the history of the school, it is certainly curious that so many of its leaders were of Evangelical training. "Of the three great authors of the Tracts, Mr. Keble was the only one belonging to the school of traditional Anglican theology." In Cardinal Newman himself nothing is more striking, as Mr. Gladstone points out, than the frank disclosure in his *Apologia* "of the close spiritual associations between Evangelical doctrine and feeling and the foundations of his religious life." The point of connection between the two schools does not seem so difficult to discover. The Evangelicals had cared little for Church laws and principles, and had overlooked the fact that they belonged to a Church whose formularies set forth very strong teaching on some of these points. To ministerial orders they attached but slight importance, and fretted under the restraints which they imposed upon them. The anomaly of their position was unseen by themselves. Church theory they had none; and while the flush of youthful zeal continued, the lack was not perceived. The good accomplished was too manifest and too precious to allow of objections being started—at all events, by those in whom devout gratitude for deliverance from the coldness, barrenness, and rationalism of the previous generation absorbed every other feeling. But when the early enthusiasm, if not wholly quenched, had considerably abated, men of devout spirit, who had been trained in the Prayer Book, became conscious of a void. The Prayer Book was full of ideas called "Catholic," of which there was little or nothing in the Evangelical teaching. That teaching ignored the "priest" to whom

the bishop had committed the tremendous power to loose or retain men's sins, and whom the Rubrics directed, on certain occasions, to pronounce the solemn form of Absolution. It treated as subordinate, though still important points, the sacraments to which the liturgy gives a kind of mystic efficacy. It was based entirely on the authority of Scripture, and showed little, if any, deference to the voice of catholicity or antiquity. It must be granted by those who have the profoundest appreciation of all that Evangelicalism involves, that its position in a Church with a liturgy shaped by the Caroline divines was logically untenable. What it appeared to the new school of thinkers is put with all his characteristic force by Cardinal Newman.

"The system in question, if so it may be called, is, as we have intimated, full of inconsistencies and anomalies; it is built not on one principle, but on half-a-dozen, and thus contains within it the seeds of ruin which time only is required to develop. At present not any one principle does it carry out logically; nor does it try to adjust and limit one by the other; but as the English language is partly Saxon, partly Latin, with some German, some French, some Dutch, and some Italian, so this religious creed is made up of the fragments of religion which the course of events has brought together and imbedded in it—something of Lutheranism and something of Calvinism, something of Erastianism and something of Zwinglianism, a little Judaism and a little dogmatism, and not a little secularity, as if by hazard. It has no straightforward view of any one point on which it professes to teach; and to hide its poverty, it has dressed itself out in a maze of words which all inquirers feel and are perplexed with, yet few

are able to penetrate. It cannot pronounce plainly what it holds about the sacraments, what it means by unity, what it thinks of antiquity, what fundamentals are, what the Church, what, again, it means by faith. It has no intelligible rule for interpreting Scripture beyond that of submission to the arbitrary comments which have come to it, though it knows it not, from Zwingle or Melancthon. 'Unstable as water, it cannot excel.'"[1]

This is a sweeping indictment expressed in very incisive terms. Possibly it might not be easy to sustain all its counts; but that there is truth in its allegations is to be inferred from the extent to which the Evangelical school, by the concessions made of late years to the High Church party, have tacitly admitted their former weakness. But, true or not, it is the view which these Oxford reformers had conceived, and on which they acted. They had no thought of returning to the formal and lifeless orthodoxy of their fathers; they were desirous of retaining all the new truth and life which the Church had gathered from the Evangelical movement. What they desired was to correct its errors and supplement its deficiencies. The "High and dry" party had been nothing but Churchmen; the Evangelicals had been everything but Churchmen. What this new and earnest generation were bent on doing was to retain all the Evangelicalism *plus* the Churchmanship. As time rolled on, and their opinions became more developed, many of them were forced to confess that their position was just as indefensible as that of the Evangelicals, and that Church principles demanded submission to the Church which claimed to be Catholic and infallible. But they only felt their way to this conclusion gradually,

[1] Newman's *Essays*, vol. i. p. 295.

and their decision was greatly facilitated and hastened by the course of events. The charges frequently and somewhat rashly hurled against them of treason to Protestantism are natural enough under the circumstances, but so far as they imply that there was any conscious disloyalty to their own Church, they are absolutely without proof. They were not Protestants, but their contention was that neither was the Church to which they belonged. They believed that it was meant to be the *via media*, and in that path of moderation they sought to walk, until they discovered that this mode of harmonizing irreconcileable principles was a mere illusion; that in ecclesiastical affairs, as in the deeper concerns of the soul, it is impossible to serve two masters; that authority must be supreme, or it cannot be maintained at all; that a Church which puts forth the right to reform itself must concede the same to all; that there was, in short, no consistent resting-place between Rome and liberty.

IV.

The new school seemed to rise suddenly; but there had been considerable preparation for it, which we are now able to trace with some distinctness, though to those living amid the events the connection was not perceptible. There were pioneers whose ideas produced results which they themselves could not have anticipated. Canon Oakely speaks of the teaching of Dr. Charles Lloyd, afterwards bishop of Oxford, whose lectures as Regius Professor of Divinity helped him and his companions to "truer views of the Catholic religion generally current in the country." But this is the view of a divine who was one of the most distinguished converts whom

Rome was able to secure from the Oxford school, and he looked at the subject from the standpoint of a Roman Catholic. To those who remained in the Anglican Church, the relation of the bishop to the movement would probably not be so apparent. He was a "High Churchman of Tory principles," but with kindly sentiments towards Roman Catholics, and in his lectures on the Council of Trent and the Prayer Book he appears to have taken a more broad and philosophic, as well as more "Catholic," view of these subjects than was common at the time. Such teachings may have had the effect of softening the strong prejudice against the Romish Church, which was as much a social and political as an ecclesiastical sentiment; but that is the utmost he can be said to have done—and even that was scarcely understood till a much later date. It was "a new notion of Catholics and Catholic doctrine" that he gave, rather than any suggestions as to the special position occupied by the Anglican Church. "Upon the subjects of Church Authority, Episcopacy, the Apostolical Succession, and others, with which the earlier Tracts were almost exclusively occupied, I do not remember to have derived any very definite ideas from Dr. Lloyd's teachings." Of course, in weakening the strength of Protestant sentiment, preparation was made for treating all these questions in a new spirit. The Church of England was made to appear not so much as the keen antagonist of Rome, but as a friendly society, reluctantly forced into separation, prizing the precious legacy which it had received from the older community, and desirous, as far as possible, to repair the breach between them. It is easy to see how the tone of thought and feeling which Dr. Lloyd thus fostered prepared the way for the Tracts,

even though there may not have been in his teaching the germs of the system which was developed in them.

For them we must look to the writings of a man of more obscure position, and whose influence was of a more private character—Alexander Knox. To many, and even to those who are familiar with the history of the movement, he is nothing more than a name; to others not even so much. How far he exerted a direct influence upon the minds of the leaders it would not be possible to discover. But it is certain that in his letters, and in those of his most frequent correspondent and intimate friend, Dr. Jebb, the vicar of Limerick, we have the conception of the Anglican Church which the Tractarian writers wrought out with such completeness, and a foreshadowing of the entire movement. Dr. Newman refers to him as one who had clearly foreseen what was coming; and, in fact, as having been the prophet of the new movement. His devoted attachment to the Anglican Church led him to anticipate that Providence would in some way lift it up from the condition of practical inefficiency into which, in his view, it had fallen. "No Church on earth has more intrinsic excellence, yet no Church probably has less practical influence." He could not believe that so unnatural a condition of things would be allowed to continue, and he anticipated that in all probability some tribulation might be the means of reviving the memory of truths which it had forgotten, and so of enduing it with a power which has long been lost. "Another fall by Dissenterism will make it be felt, that if Popery can be a Charybdis, there is a Scylla on the other side no less dangerous. But it will be still more useful to learn that, in the mixed mass of Roman Catholic religion, there is gold, and silver, and precious stones,

as well as wood, hay, and stubble; and that everything of the former nature is to be as carefully preserved, as everything of the latter nature is to be widely rejected."[1]

He reasons from the analogy of the Restoration that a calamity to the Anglican Church, such as overtook it in the seventeenth century, would be followed by a revival of High Church spirit and teaching such as was seen at the Restoration. The passage is so remarkable as to deserve quotation. "The distress of the English Episcopal Church, during the Usurpation, had more than ever endeared her to her genuine children; and the hand which inflicted the discipline served to abate all undue Protestant zeal. A revision, therefore, of the liturgy being called for, the revisers seized the opportunity (contrary to what the public was reckoning upon) to make our formularies not more puritanic, but more Catholic. They effected this without doubt stealthily, and, to appearance, by the minutest alterations; but to compare the Communion Service, as it now stands, especially its rubrics, with the form in which we find it previously to that transaction, will be to discover that, without any change of features which could cause alarm, a new spirit was then breathed into our Communion Service, principally by a few significant circumstances in the manner of conducting the business, which were fitted to impress the devout, though certain to be fully understood only by the initiated." Admitting that the dread of Popery was stronger in England at the time of his writing than even at the earlier date, he reasons that any calamity suffered from the opposite side would produce an entire change of sentiment, of which he gives the following hints: "It would not be strange if there were

[1] *Knox's Remains*, vol. i. p. 58.

a rebound of feeling; a self-reproach, for having been so unsuspicious of Protestants. . . . Perhaps some of the grossest errors might, on close examination, be found to point us to valuable but hitherto neglected truths; and we should possibly, in several instances, discover that there was a providential necessity for questionable practices to continue, until there was a disposition somewhere to extract the entire spirit from the unworthy, but till then indispensable vehicle."[1] It is necessary here to say how completely this prophecy has been fulfilled.

Alexander Knox was a Churchman of devout spirit, strong religiousness, and independent thought, who was dissatisfied with Evangelical teachings. He sympathized with the spiritual aims and purposes of the school, he recognized the value of the service it had done to religion, but he believed that it had left one side of Christian doctrine and life uncultivated, and still more, that it had failed to develop the true idea of the Anglican Church. The account he gives of himself in a letter dated so far back as March, 1806, is extremely curious, when viewed in the light of to-day—

"I am a Churchman in grain; not a Tory Churchman, for that is a disease in the Church, not its constitutional term; nor yet a Whig Churchman, for they did not value enough the distinguishing features of our Establishment. But if I may use the term, I am a primitive Churchman, prizing in our system, most cordially, what it has retained from Christian antiquity, as well as what it has gained from the good sense of the Reformers, in expurgating it from later abuses. But the truth is, I am not one whit Puritanic: I love Episcopacy, the surplice,

[1] *Remains*, vol. i. pp. 59–63.

festivals, the communion table set altar-wise, antiphonal devotions, *i.e.*, versicle and response. I am somewhat un-Puritanic, too—being much more engaged by the sublime piety of St. Chrysostom than by the devotional dogmas of St. Austin or any of his followers." [1]

Here is a Tractarian before Tractarianism. The "primitive Churchman," as Mr. Knox describes himself, is the "Catholic" whom we now know as the Ritualist. What he might have been and done, had not his chronic ill-health unfitted him for public work, and made him a contemplative recluse, instead of an active leader of men, it would be profitless to inquire. He only scattered seeds, but they were of such a character that they could not fail to bear abundant fruit in the congenial soil into which they were cast. He was a man *sui generis*, large-hearted, and liberal in sympathy in an age whose tendencies were towards narrow exclusiveness, cultivating the society of good men of all parties, and honouring them for their piety even where he dissented most from their opinions, acquainted with Dissenting literature, and doing it as full justice as he rendered to that of his own Church, but withal striking out an independent course and holding it firmly. In his early days he was a friend of John Wesley's, and later on a correspondent of Mrs. Hannah More, so that he had an intimate knowledge of the Evangelicals. But they did not satisfy his cravings, nor did they bring out his conception of the peculiarity which he believed to be the true distinction of his own Church, which furnished "the best and loveliest form of visible Christianity." After his death it was asserted by an ardent Evangelical that in his last days he had changed his views, and inclined more to the

[1] *Remains*, vol. iv. p. 206.

party which hitherto he had somewhat freely criticised. But of this there is no proof, while all the probabilities are in the contrary direction. So far as his letters show, his "Catholic" principles grew stronger, and his doubts as to the wisdom of our Reformers more confirmed. "We are," he says, in a letter to Mrs. Hannah More written in 1810, "no further members of the Church of England than as we are, in the justest and strictest sense, Catholic; that is, diligent inquirers after the united sense of the regular Christian Church" (in interpreting Holy Scripture), "and steady adherents to what we there find clearly avouched to us."[1] From this conception there is no sign of departure, and, in truth, through his long life, he seems to have been as consistent in his maintenance of these principles, to which he gives the name of Catholic, as Dr. Pusey himself.

But the question of his individual position is a very minor one. He is interesting as a typical character, one of the most striking illustrations of the tendencies of a pious soul trained in Anglican ideas and tenacious of Anglican principles. There was no antecedent prejudice against Evangelical simplicity, but rather the contrary. There was no official sentiment inclining him to a theory which would exalt the office and order to which he belonged. He was not dominated by the traditions of a school which might have helped him to find some mode of reconciling Evangelical ideas with the Anglican formularies. Living much alone, pursuing his train of thought in the quiet solitude of his own study, he took his independent position. There must have been some good Churchmen in whose minds were the same opposite currents, but in him they had freer play,

[1] *Remains*, vol. iv. 240.

and the result was what we must be prepared to find under similar conditions continually, a devout Anglo-Catholicism.

Admitting that his Church, in common with other reformed Churches, holds "that the fundamentals must have Holy Scripture for their basis," he maintains that it holds also a second principle peculiar to itself, "that in elucidating fundamentals, or in deciding secondary questions relating not to the essence of Christianity, but to the well-being and right ordering of a Church, the concurrent voice of sacred antiquity, the Catholic rule —'quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus'—is, next to sacred Scripture, our surest guide; and in the matters to which it is justly applicable, a providentially authoritative guide; nay, more than providentially, rather, where the indication is clear, divinely authoritative, because Christ has said, 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.'"[1]

These opinions are not quoted merely to show that Mr. Alexander Knox must be regarded as a pioneer of the movement which afterwards became so powerful, but rather to prove that the school of thought of which he was the precursor had its origin not in deliberate disloyalty to the Anglican Church, but in an earnest desire to develop that which was believed to be the characteristic feature of the teaching of the Anglican Church. If a charge of treason and conspiracy could be established against the early Tractarians, there would be less cause for apprehension as to the future of the Church on which their successors have now so strong a hold.

The Protestant who believes that the Anglican Church belongs to him might indeed be gratified if he could

[1] Knox's *Essays*, vol. iv. p. 43.

believe that this entire movement was due either to the eccentricity or the unfaithfulness of a few gifted individuals who, unfortunately for the Church in which they were trained, had felt the attraction of Rome. Phenomena of this kind are not likely to be of frequent recurrence; and it might be hoped that when the present fever had spent itself, there would be a return to a more sound condition of clerical thought and Church feeling. This was the view entertained by numbers thirty years ago after the secessions to which the Gorham judgment had led. Those perversions were supposed to justify all that had been said as to the Romeward spirit and tendencies of the whole movement, and it was hoped that the loss which they inflicted upon the Established Church would be more than compensated by the freedom from a disturbing and reactionary element. The experience of the subsequent period has shown the vanity of these calculations, and ought to have shaken the opinions of those who from the beginning insisted that there was more or less of Romish inspiration in the whole movement. There could be no more complete delusion, and the effects of it are so mischievous that it is worth some trouble to expose it. In disproof it is not necessary even to adduce the distinct statements of the authors of the Tracts themselves, though these must be accepted as conclusive by all who do not believe the writers deliberately dishonest. There is independent evidence altogether in the fact that there were Tractarians before Tractarianism, who laid down the fundamental principles of the Oxford school with as much distinctness as Dr. Newman or Dr. Pusey.

V.

Alexander Knox, as we have seen, was one of these precursors of the Oxford school; but his pupil and correspondent, Dr. Jebb, bishop of Limerick, may be cited as a still more remarkable example. An appendix to the sermons of this eminent prelate of the Irish Church, which has always been supposed to be free from this Romish taint, contains the Tractarian teaching in germ. The fourth edition was published before the appearance of the first tract, and the bishop, without any party object, simply sets forth his own view of the Church of England. He starts with a quotation from Mosheim, of which he gives an independent translation, which is certainly a more faithful rendering of the original than that of Dr. Maclaine. The great Church historian describes the English Church as "that correction of the old religion which separates the Britons equally from the Roman Catholics and from the other communities who have renounced the domination of the Pope." Here is the *via media* of which so much was heard in the Tractarian controversy, and on which Dr. Newman in particular expended such pains, and which he so irradiated with all the charms of his genius and eloquence, that it has been a very common notion that it was he who laid it down. But before he wrote at all, Bishop Jebb had insisted that it was the true idea of the Church of England, and quoted very high authorities, from Ridley downwards, in support of his view. Speaking of the revisers of 1662, he says—

"Those wise and pious men had a deep reverence for Catholic antiquity; and from this reverence they omitted no fair opportunities of giving prominence to

the great principles which constitute the tie between the Church of England and the purer ages of Catholicity. One of the chief agents was the admirable Pearson, whose exposition of the Creed, and particularly his incomparable selection of authorities, proves that Vincentius could not have a disciple more thoroughly like-minded. But the attentive observer of what was then effected will perceive the spirit of the workmen in every touch of their hand. To correct certain departures from antiquity, which, at the persuasion of Martin Bucer, but, we have strong reason to believe, against the judgment of the wise and temperate Ridley, had crept into the second book of Edward, was evidently, their primary object." [1]

The bishop corroborates the view which has already been taken in these lectures of the intention of the party which gave the Prayer Book its present form, and by doing so expelled Baxter and his friends from the National Church. His is the judgment of one who had not been affected by the influence of the heated controversies of recent times. Without claiming for him impartiality, this may at least be said, that his view of the position of his own Church is that which commended itself to a thoughtful and devout Christian who had been brought up in its principles and traditions. It is not even necessary to assume that his view is absolutely correct. If it be one which an honest and independent thinker can legitimately form and can support by a great variety of evidence, it is one which is certain from time to time to develop itself in the Church, even if, as is more probable, it does not assert a permanent hold there. The Church of England "steers a

[1] Jebb's *Sermons on Subjects chiefly Practical*, p. 390.

middle course. She reveres the Scripture; she respects tradition." "Her appeal is made to past ages against every possible error of the present." The path of the perplexed churchman is plain. "It is not merely his own judgment; it is not, by any means, the dictatorial mandate of an ecclesiastical director which is to silence his scruples and dissolve his doubts. His resort is that concurrent, universal, and undeviating sense of pious antiquity, which he has been instructed, and should be encouraged, to embrace, to follow, and revere."[1]

The Tracts are simply built upon this foundation. Grant the authority of tradition and the right of appeal to "pious antiquity," and it is hard to say what we may be required to accept. There is an end of Protestantism; for Protestantism recognizes no infallible interpreter of the Divine law, and suffers no restriction of the freest right of the individual conscience. No position, however, could be more logically indefensible. On every side it presents points of attack, and it is raked by the cross-fires of the army of spiritual freedom on the one side and the hosts of priestly despotism on the other. Almost every word in the celebrated canon opens new matter of discussion, and any answer given to the doubts that are suggested only introduces a new series of insoluble problems. The principle indeed might be granted with little practical result. If it is only the unanimous voice of "pious antiquity" which is to be heard, the amount of truth to be believed would certainly not be large. But from this "pious antiquity" is tacitly excepted the mass of opinion which the majority of Councils has branded as heresy, but which may in fact be as worthy of consideration as that which the Church regards as orthodox

[1] Jebb's *Sermons on Subjects chiefly Practical*, pp. 405, 406.

Heretics have often been among the truest, the bravest, the most loyal followers of Christ, but they are to be treated as dwellers in the outer darkness, whose dissent from the conclusions of "pious antiquity" must not be allowed to affect its value. The Anglican has a line beyond which the antiquity ceases to be pious, or at least to have authority. But the reason why it should be drawn at the particular point he has selected is not so obvious to others as it is to him. The Romanist denies the propriety of setting up any line of demarcation whatever, and demands that the authority of the Catholic Church being once conceded, the right of the mediæval be recognized as fully as that of the primitive Church. The point is too obvious to require explanation or illustration. The marvel is how intelligent men can believe that any Church can have the right to liberty and authority—liberty in virtue of which it protests against the usurpations of a Church which, at least, is able to appeal to the prescription of centuries and the assent of a large section of Christendom in its favour and authority, in virtue of which it denies to others the freedom to which it owes its own existence. A reformed Church isolating itself from all Protestant communities and setting up for its own Protestantism (for however moderate the changes it has introduced, and whatever the name by which it is called, Protestantism it is), a claim to the authority supposed to attach to Catholicity, is one of the most extraordinary anomalies to be found in the ecclesiastical world.

But such the Church of England unquestionably is. It has always, from the time of the Reformation, included men who had little or nothing of this ecclesiastical temper, and whose desire it was to make the Church as

free and decided in its Protestantism as they believed it was intended to be. It is also true that among the first Reformers were some who conscientiously endeavoured to give it this character, and that perhaps there never was a period of any length in which they had not some successors and representatives. There have not always been Evangelicals, but there have always been Low Churchmen who have maintained a certain Protestant tradition. But the formularies lend but little countenance to their views, whereas the Prayer Book is full of that hierarchical and sacerdotal spirit of which Tractarianism was the incarnation.

VI.

The various influences—philosophical and poetical, romantic and practical—which had been affecting the minds of the young and ardent Churchmen at Oxford are well described by Newman himself, in an article in *The British Critic* in 1839. Coleridge and Scott, it need not be said, had no direct connection with the school, but in the view of its most distinguished member they had mainly contributed to produce a "tendency towards the character of mind and feeling of which the Catholic doctrines are the just expression." The effect of the writings of the "great wizard of the North" in stimulating chivalrous sentiment, awakening a reverent admiration for the past, surrounding the Church with a halo of interest and glory, and so helping to inspire a passionate devotion to its cause, can easily be understood. "Doubtless," says Newman, "there are things in the poems and romances in question of which a correct judgment is forced to disapprove, and which

must ever be a matter of regret; but, contrasted with the popular writers of the last century, and some of its most admired poets, as Pope, they stand almost as oracles of Truth confronting the ministers of error and sin." [1] They were, in fact, permeated by an intense hatred of Liberalism. They were Jacobite in politics and Romish in religious spirit, and books of this character, acting on the susceptible spirits of young men, themselves already possessed with an enthusiasm with the mediæval temper, naturally helped to promote the reaction.

That Coleridge, who is held in such veneration by a large class of Liberal thinkers, and whose writings have exercised so strong an influence in forming the opinions of some distinguished Broad Churchmen, should be regarded as the philosopher of the opposite party is more remarkable. But Transcendentalism seems to offer the champions of authority the very foundation which they want, and it is thus that it is viewed by one who was fitted, perhaps beyond any other man, to describe the natural history of the movement. His account is full of suggestive interest. After speaking of the influence of Scott, he says—

"While history in prose and verse was thus made the instrument of Church feelings and opinions, a philosophical basis for the same was under formation in England by a very original thinker, who, while he indulged in a liberty of speculation which no Christian could tolerate, and advocated conclusions which were often heathen rather than Christian, yet after all instilled a higher philosophy into inquiring minds than they had hitherto been accustomed to accept. In this way

[1] *Essays*, vol. i. 267.

he made trial of the age, and found it respond to him, and succeeded in interesting its genius in the cause of Catholic truth. It has, indeed, been only since the death of Coleridge that these results of his writings have fully shown themselves; but they were very evident when they were once seen, and discovered the tendencies which had been working in his mind from the first. Two living poets may be added, one of whom in the department of fantastic fiction, the other in that of philosophical meditation, have addressed themselves to the same high principles and feelings and carried forward their readers in the same direction."[1]

The genesis of the movement is thus traced in order to confute the notion described as "plainly idle and perverse," that a few individuals, whether as mere eccentrics, or as "simple Dominics" working covertly in the interests of Rome, had entered upon this work and accomplished so extraordinary a revolution in Church sentiment and feeling. Looking at the subject broadly, and especially with the light that the subsequent history of Tractarianism has thrown upon it, it must be submitted that it was a natural development, and not, in any true sense, a monstrous growth of the Anglican Church. It is hard to believe that Sheldon would have regarded the teaching of the Tracts with any disapproval. The Nonjurors were representatives of the opinions and tendencies which the Oxford school have worked out under more propitious conditions and with greater success; and though their secession from the Church left the power entirely in the hands of the Erastians, it was not to be supposed that a party which had once been supreme, and which was the true

[1] *Essays Critical and Historical*, vol. i. p. 268.

exponent of the most characteristic principles of the Prayer Book, could be permanently suppressed. Some of the High Church utterances of John Wesley, and especially the sacramentarian views found in some of the Wesleyan hymns, show at least how much there was in the Prayer Book to incline a devout spirit to this type of piety, and suggest that under different influences the Wesleys might even have anticipated the action of Newman and Pusey. In 1830 there was a spirit abroad which affected both these leaders and their followers. Coleridge, Scott, Southey, and Wordsworth had in different ways helped to foster it. But, as Newman with his penetrating insight perceived, it was a phenomenon "in a manner quite independent of things visible and historical. It is not here or there; really it has no progress, no causes, no fortunes; it is not a movement, it is a spirit; it is a spirit afloat, neither 'in the secret chambers,' nor 'in desert,' but everywhere. It is within us, rising up in the heart, where it was least expected, and working its way, though not in secret, yet so subtly and impalpably, as hardly to admit of precaution or encounter, on any ordinary human rules of opposition. It is an adversary in the air, a something one and entire, a whole wherever it is, unapproachable and incapable of being grasped, as being the result of causes far deeper than political or other visible agencies."[1]

It is because so many of the opponents of the school failed to perceive this that their resistance was so miserable and unsuccessful. They dealt with the symptoms instead of seeking to understand the root of the evil, or they treated it as an acute disease due to special causes, when in truth it was a constitutional malady.

[1] *Essays Critical and Historical*, vol. i. p. 271.

All that can be said as to the influence of individuals or of circumstances, is that the peculiar difficulties of the times, and the inspiration of some special teachers, told upon a number of ardent young Churchmen. They were not of one class, they had not been trained in the same school, but gradually they were brought into sympathy by their common devotion to the Church.

That the spirit of which Laud was the most conspicuous representative should have displayed such extraordinary power in this age is no doubt surprising; but if there was to be such a revival, it might safely have been predicted that the old Anglican university should be the centre of its activity. Oxford has always been the home of the most intense Anglicanism, and it had been thrown into a perfect state of panic by the energy which marked the action of the popular party after the passing of the Reform Bill. Remembering that Earl Grey was the head of the Liberal Government, and that he was followed by Lord Melbourne —who always seems to us to have stumbled into the Liberal premiership by accident, and never to have had any true faith in progress—it is hard to realize the state of feeling which, as has been seen, moved Newman, and was still more strongly developed in some of his associates. "There was not," says the Rev. W. Palmer, of Worcester College, in his narrative, "a single stone of the sacred edifice of the Church which was not examined, shaken, undermined by a meddling and ignorant curiosity. Such was our condition in the early part of 1833. We knew not to what quarter to look for support. Prelacy threatened and apparently intimidated. A Government making its powers subservient to agitators who avowedly sought the destruction of the Church. The State, so long

the guardian of the Church, now becoming its enemy and its tyrant. Enemies within the Church seeking the subversion of its essential characteristics. And what was worst of all, no principle in the public mind to which we could appeal: an utter ignorance of all rational grounds of attachment to the Church; an oblivion of its spiritual character as an institution, not of man, but of God; the grossest Erastianism most widely prevalent, especially among all classes of politicians."[1]

This appears now a highly coloured picture, but exaggerated as the fears of Tory Churchmen look in the retrospect, there can be no doubt that this is a truthful description of the state of panic into which they had been thrown. That any sober-minded men should have been thus alarmed by anything so moderate as the mild Whiggery of Earl Grey seems incredible. But England had escaped so long from the exciting influences of the French Revolution that the revelations of the pent-up excitement which had been slumbering under the outward calm which Tory repression had produced, were very startling to all the defenders of vested institutions, and to none more than to the champions of the Established Church.

The hour of depression and anxiety found the men ready for the work of revival. The exigencies of the time and the affinities of religious and political sentiment forced into union a little group of ardent enthusiasts, who in a spirit of chivalry banded themselves together, in the hope of resisting what appeared to them the advancing force of revolution. The revival of a Church spirit was, in their view, the best way of accomplishing this end, for not only was the Church

[1] Palmer's *Narrative*, p. 4.

threatened, and with it religion also, but the want of faith was regarded by them as the primary cause of that reckless spirit of change which was rampant everywhere, and assailing everything. If the Church could be restored to its rightful position, everything would be saved; if not, there was nothing to expect but a succession of changes, each more extreme and mischievous than its predecessor.

VII.

It is needless to say that John Henry Newman was the most distinguished of a distinguished company, but at the beginning the most influential of the group was Keble. It is extremely curious—remembering that the one died a country clergyman in the Anglican Church, whereas the other is now a cardinal—to be told by Newman that "when I was elected fellow of Oriel Keble was not in residence. He was shy of me for years, in consequence of the marks which I bore upon me of the Evangelical and liberal school." Still, even then the younger man had a profound admiration for the elder, and he tells us of the awe with which he looked up to him at the beginning of his collegiate life. Very touchingly he says in his reminiscences, in relation to the congratulations which he received on his election to the fellowship from his seniors: "I bore it till Keble took both my hands, and then felt so abashed and unworthy of the honour done me that I seemed desirous of quite sinking into the ground. His had been the first name which I had heard spoken of, with reverence rather than admiration, when I came up to Oxford." The influence which a man regarded with such veneration would give to a

new movement is incalculable. He was older and had more experience than most of his associates, and his was one of those saintly characters which command the affection and respect even of those who are most opposed to their doctrines.

Keble was both the saint and the poet of the school. It had other saints and other poets, but there was in Keble more of the purely mystical temper than in any other of the little company who undertook the bold task of giving the Anglican Church an entirely new character, which, however it might be justified by the formularies, had never been attained except during the brief period of Laud's tyranny. The spirit of Keble may be understood from the closing sentences of the preface to *The Christian Year*, in which he speaks "of that *soothing* tendency of the Prayer Book, which it is the chief purpose of these pages to exhibit." Of all men he seemed least fitted to take a prominent part in polemical warfare, but combined with a singular sweetness of temper, there was an intensity of faith, and a devotion to what he believed to be truth, which prepared him, when the occasion demanded, to be a fearless champion of the cause he had espoused. To his celebrated assize sermon, preached in the University pulpit, on July 14, 1833, Newman dates the movement, and in his *Apologia* tells us that as such he "ever considered and kept the day."

It was certainly a sermon distinguished by remarkable faithfulness, and was heard by the friends of the Church as a trumpet-blast that called them to arms in defence of all they most loved. The subject was the "National Apostacy," and its keynote is found in the reference drawn from our Lord's words, "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth

Me," from which he concludes, "These words of Divine truth put beyond all sophistical conception, what common sense would lead us to infer, and what daily experience teaches;—that disrespect to the successors of the apostles, as such, is an unquestionable symptom of enmity to Him who gave them their commission, and pledged Himself to be with them for ever. Suppose such disrespect general and national; suppose it also avowedly grounded, not on any fancied test of religion, but on mere human reasons of popularity and expediency, either there is no meaning at all in these emphatic declarations of our Lord, or that nation, how highly soever she may think of her own religion and morality, stands convicted in His sight of a direct disavowal of His sovereignty."[1]

The intent of all this was unmistakable. The condition thus hypothetically stated was the actual state of the English nation. The sermon itself and the advertisement to the first edition show how deeply troubled the mind of the preacher was. The intensity of his feeling is, indeed, the only excuse which can be urged in extenuation of so grave an impropriety as the employment of an assize sermon, preached before the judges, and with all the solemnity which the occasion must have lent to it, as an instrument of attack upon the existing Government. It is true that the preacher urges that "submission and obedience are still duties," but no effort is spared to discredit the principles and policy of those to whom these duties are to be paid. We are living in exciting times now, and the High Church sentiment is doubtless more pronounced and more powerful than it was in 1833; but it is not easy to conceive of

[1] Keble's *Sermons*, pp. 139, 140.

a clergyman venturing now to preach a violent party sermon under similar circumstances. The only plea that can be urged in favour of Mr. Keble is that he spoke under a deeply conscientious feeling of duty to the Church. The Legislature — "the members of which were not even bound to profess belief in the atonement"—had undertaken to make laws for the Church, and had gone so far as to ratify the principle that it was only "one sect among many." Erastian principles were supreme, and it had become a question whether it was possible for Churchmen to remain in the communion of the Established Church without incurring the taint. The calamity (the suppression of the Irish bishoprics) which had overtaken the Church between the delivery of the sermon and its publication justified the fear that their children's children would have to say, "There was once here a glorious Church, but it was betrayed into the hands of libertines for the real or affected love of a little temporary peace and good order." That such reflections should occur to a Churchman under the circumstances is not surprising. What was open to question was the propriety, or even decency, of raising a war cry on such an occasion, and appealing to Churchmen to rally for a determined resistance to the Government. To us, reading this after the lapse of nearly half a century, it is still more surprising that Mr. Keble himself was so easily reconciled to the Erastian rule he so justly deprecates, and, most of all, that the party who have inherited his principles, and pushed them to a still further point, have also imitated his acquiescence. Church principles may be more generally held to-day than then, but the evils of which Mr. Keble complained remain not only undiminished but even

intensified. The Parliament has not assumed a more Christian character, has found it impossible to stand on the "thin ledge" of Deism. Nor has it abandoned any of its pretensions to ecclesiastical rule. Indeed the more pronounced the "Catholic" claims of the Church, the more decided the Erastianism of the State. Is it possible that the dreaded taint of this Erastianism is even on those who have accepted the defence and propagation of these Church principles as their primary duty? Assuredly few sights are less admirable than the contrast between the loftiness of these pretensions and the meekness that accepts the contempt with which they are treated with such long-suffering resignation.

For Keble it may be urged, what cannot be said for his successors, that he trusted to the revival of Church sentiment and principle for checking the encroachments of the State. The experiment has been tried for half-a-century, and has signally failed. Keble and his fellow-workers may have the credit of earnestly and conscientiously making the attempt. The result has been the encouragement in many of the clergy of a lawlessness which professes to be spiritual independence, but not a solitary concession on the part of the State. It is strange that this should content those who claim to represent the authority of the "Holy Catholic Church."

The delivery of the sermon was speedily followed by the issue of the celebrated Tracts. Sir John Coleridge, in his Life of his friend, tells us that "Keble was the true and primary author" of the movement, and quotes some letters which show at least that he had a principal hand in the work, though they hardly establish so much as the biographer asserts. "What think you," Keble says to a friend, "of a kind of association (as quiet and

unpretending as may be, if possible, even without a name) for the promotion of the two objects, first, the circulation of primitive notions regarding the Apostolic Succession; and secondly, the protection of the Prayer Book against profane innovation?" Keble was a High Churchman, and had been trained in High Church principles, and his whole action shows that his one idea was restoration; and the association he was anxious to see established was to have this only in view. There is as little reason to suspect any of his associates of an ulterior object. The thought of one and all was the purification and salvation of the Anglican Church.

Whether Keble first conceived the plan of an association is a point of very slight importance. Possibly the idea occurred simultaneously to several minds possessed by these High Church sympathies. "I," says Cardinal Newman, "had out of my own head begun the Tracts;" but he also gives us to understand that the commencement of the Tracts was not the actual rise of the movement. The Rev. William Palmer, of Worcester College, who was extremely anxious for a committee or association, gives us this account: "I had not been," he says, "very intimately acquainted with Mr. Newman and Mr. Froude, and was scarcely known to Mr. Keble or Mr. Perceval, when our deep sense of the wrongs sustained by the Church in the suppression of bishoprics and our feelings of the necessity of doing whatever was in our power to arrest the tide of evil, brought us together in the summer of 1833. It was at the beginning of the Long Vacation (when, Mr. Froude being almost the only occupant of Oriel College, we frequently met in the common-room) that the resolution to unite and associate in defence of

the Church, of her violated liberties, and her neglected principles, arose."[1]

The Rev. H. J. Rose, then the vicar of Hadleigh, was consulted, and a celebrated conference at Hadleigh was one of the landmarks in the history of the movement, as Mr. Rose was certainly one of the most active among its original promoters. The differences which afterwards became more apparent early manifested themselves. Mr. Rose soon abandoned the company, and, from the first, Froude and Newman were more daring and resolute than most of the band, and especially than those who were already in the enjoyment of ecclesiastical preferments. Froude, says Newman—and we shall presently find abundant illustration of the remark—was "a bold rider: as on horseback, so also in his speculations;" but others were more timid, and shrank equally from his logical consistency and from the independence of Newman, who speaks of himself as the representative of personality in opposition to Palmer and Rose, who desired the support of organization in their movement. After much difficulty and several abortive attempts, terms of agreement were at last formulated and circulated in parsonages and other places where, it was hoped, they might be accepted as the basis of regular association. This hope was disappointed, but the expressions of sympathy received were sufficient to assure the leaders that they had behind them a large amount of Church, and especially of clerical opinion.

In all these preliminary steps, great as was the service which Keble rendered by means of his courageous assertion of principle—which was all the more impressive because of his gentleness of spirit, his high reputation,

[1] Palmer's *Narrative*, pp. 5, 6.

his moderating counsels — it was not so valuable as that which he had already done in the publication of *The Christian Year*. That book was not intended in any sense to serve the ends of party. It was issued in a time of perfect tranquillity, before the removal of Catholic disabilities had aroused the alarm and indignation of Oxford Churchmen. Its effect has undoubtedly been the growth of a strong Church sentiment, and so far, but so far only, can it be regarded as doing the special work of a party. Its mysticism, its reverence for the Church and its authority, the sanctity and beauty with which it invests all Church festivals, the reverential tone approaching to the superstitious which it takes towards the sacraments, and its great tenderness for Rome—all unite to foster the ideas and feelings of the school from which it emanates. Its utterances on Church questions are always distinct, often very emphatic, and in some cases very misleading and mischievous. But apart from these, there is the expression of sentiments, in which every true Christian heart must unite, often couched in language as choice and chaste as the thought itself is striking. As an interpreter both of nature and of Scripture, Mr. Keble shows great originality and spiritual insight, though, it must be confessed, he indulges in occasional conceits that spoil the effect of poems which would otherwise be extremely touching and beautiful. Many of his hymns have found a place in all our collections, and are sung in the Dissenting meeting-house with as much heart as in the churches for which they were primarily intended. Several of them indeed are familiar as household words. His morning and evening hymns, if they have not actually supplanted those of Ken, may certainly challenge

comparison with them in point of popularity. There are other poems which, being more deeply spiritual and subjective, appeal to a smaller circle; but by the devout spirits which can enter into them, they are prized as among the best helps to true spiritual life. A book like this, so exquisite in feeling, so elevated in thought, appealing so strongly to the best affections, so directly ministering to Christian edification, could not but exert a mighty influence on behalf of the principles with which it was saturated. Its circulation has been enormous, and the effect was the preparation of the soil for the seeds of doctrinal teaching which the Tracts were to scatter. Those who have no sympathy with its distinctive ideas are very liable to underrate its power. Nonconformists assimilate the Christian sentiment which it breathes, and reject its ecclesiastical and sacramental ideas as foolish conceits or vain superstitions; but that is not the case with those who have an antecedent faith in the Church and love of the Prayer Book, and who find here only the full development of sentiments they have long held, but whose entire meaning they have not grasped. With them it has been a mighty power, certainly one of the most potent of the indirect forces which have contributed to the spread of Tractarian views.

The Catholic Revival has had other poets, but if we except the few but choice contributions of Newman himself, the only poetry which has exerted any great influence is that of *The Christian Year*. The *Lyra Apostolica*, which was published with the definite intention of promoting the interests of the school, and which included poems from its most distinguished members, may have interested admiring friends, but hardly affected any wider circle. An acute and competent critic in *The*

New Quarterly Magazine, says, "Few of these pieces are poetry in any true sense. They are hard, dogmatic, forced, and crabbed. Those who were poets among the authors seem to have put off their poet's mantle; those who were not are as heavy as performing elephants. Dr. Newman is the one exception. The verses, 'Lead, kindly Light,' which have made their way into almost every hymnal in the land, appeared here." The *Lyra Innocentium*, which Keble published at the later period marks a distinct stage in his own ecclesiastical development, and is on that account extremely interesting, especially when read in connection with Dr. Newman's criticism upon it, which taken altogether is one of the most suggestive and touching pieces of self-revelation, as well as of a criticism whose logical keenness is tempered by the kindly memories of a close friendship, which he has penned. But its artistic character is correctly described by the able writer already quoted: "The faults and merits of *The Christian Year* are in these also, but the faults are far greater and the merits fewer."

Dr. Newman tells us that Keble "did that for the Church of England which none but a poet could do; he made it poetical," and then in a passage of singular eloquence, too long to quote in full, he shows how predominant that poetic element is in the Romish Church, and how far Keble had sought to naturalize it in the Anglican, "over which he threw the poetry of his own mind and the memory of better days."

"His happy magic made the Anglican Church seem what Catholicism was and is. The established system found to its surprise that it had been all its life talking not prose but poetry—

'Miraturque novas frondes et non sua poma.'

Beneficed clergymen used to go to rest as usual on Christmas Eve, and leave to ringers, or sometimes to carollers, the observance which was paid, not without creature comforts, to the sacred night; but now they suddenly found themselves, to their great surprise, to be 'wakeful shepherds,' and 'still as the day came round,' 'in music and in light,' 'the new-born Saviour dawned upon their prayer.' Anglican bishops had not only lost the habit of blessing, but had sometimes been startled and vexed when asked to do so; but now they were told of their 'gracious arm stretched out to bless;' moreover, what they had never dreamed when they were gazetted or did homage, they were taught that each of them was an 'Apostle true, a crowned and robed seer.' The parish church had been shut up, except for vestry meetings and occasional services, all days of the year but Sundays, and one or two other sacred days; but church-goers were now assured that 'martyrs and saints dawned on their way,' that the Absolution in the Common Prayer Book was the 'Golden Key each morn and eve,' and informed, moreover, at a time too when the Real Presence was all but utterly forgotten or denied, of the 'dear feast of Jesus dying, upon that altar ever lying, while Angels prostrate fall.' They learned, besides, that what their pastors had spoken of and churchwardens had used at vestry meetings as a mere table was 'the dread altar,' and that 'holy lamps were blazing,' perfumed embers quivering bright,' 'stoled priests to minister at them,' while the 'floor was by knees of sinners worn.'"[1]

This graphic picture enables us to understand the extraordinary effect which Keble produced. *The*

[1] *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 444.

Christian Year did more to diffuse the spirit of the movement than all the elaborate subtleties of the Tracts. It affected men unconsciously to themselves, and created a sentiment more powerful and enduring than any mere logical conviction. The Protestantism of the Anglican Church has been more injured by the loyalty of Keble than by the secession of Newman. Newman may be right in saying that Keble "has kindled hearts towards his Church," [1] and perhaps even "raised up advocates for it among those who otherwise, if God and their good angel had suffered it, would have wandered away into some sort of philosophy, and acknowledged no Church at all." [2] But the Church for which he educated them was not a Protestant Church. He has done at least as much to educate the Church out of its Protestantism as to attach individuals to its communion. The school he helped to train is one to which all ideas of freedom are hateful, and by which the Romish errors that are most abhorrent to Protestant opinion and feeling are regarded with indulgence and even favour. So distinguished was Keble himself "for a deep, tender, loyal devotion to the Blessed Mary" that, writing in 1846, Newman, unwilling to give up the hope that they might again be united in the same Church, thus expressed his hopes: "The image of the Virgin and Child seem to be the one vision upon which both his heart and intellect have been formed; and those who knew Oxford twenty or thirty years ago say that, while other college rooms were ornamented with pictures of Napoleon on horseback, or Apollo and the Graces, or Heads of Houses lounging in their easy chairs, there was one man, a young and rising one, in whose rooms instead of these might

[1] *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 445. [2] Ibid.

be seen the Madonna di Sisto or Domenichino's S. John —fit augury of him who was in the end to do so much for the revival of Catholicism. We will never give up the hope, the humble belief, that that sweet and gracious Lady will not forget her servant, but will recompense him in royal wise sevenfold, bringing him and his at length into the Church of the one Saviour, and the communion of Himself and all His saints whom He has redeemed."[1] The hope was not to be fulfilled. But the best friends of the Anglican Church, certainly those who are most anxious for its Protestant character, may feel that the seeming loss it would have sustained would have been a real gain had Keble, instead of remaining to Romanize his old Church, followed his friend into that of Rome.

VIII.

A very different man from Keble—not less resolute, but more daring and extreme—was one whose early death was a heavy blow to the party, Richard Hurrell Froude. From all the accounts we have of him from his surviving friends, he must clearly be regarded as its leading spirit in its first days. Newman describes him as a "man of the highest gifts, so truly many-sided that it would be presumptuous in me to attempt to describe him, except in those aspects in which he came before me." Again he speaks of him as "a man of high genius, brimful and overflowing with ideas and views, in him original, which were too many and strong even for his bodily strength, and which crowded and jostled each other in their efforts after distinct shape and expression." This is the estimate of friendship, and may be coloured by its

[1] *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 452.

partiality; but no careful reader of the *Remains* which this accomplished and independent youthful thinker has left behind him will be inclined to charge it with serious exaggeration. What Mr. Froude might have been to the party had he lived it would not be profitable to conjecture. All that is necessary to do is to note the kind of influence which he contributed to it; for he, more than any other, may be regarded as its author. It was he who actually drew Keble into the fellowship; it was in the Oriel common-room that many of the preliminary discussions were held, he being the centre of the little knot that gathered there; and it was his presence and counsel which, as Newman shows, lent so much force and decision to their early action.

The publication of his *Remains* was one of the sensations of the struggle which, beginning with the issue of the Tracts, reached its first stage when the Gorham judgment forced a number of the party into secession to Rome. The memoir of Bishop Wilberforce shows with what alarm and displeasure it was viewed by numbers of timid men, and especially by those who had given the Tract writers a certain measure of countenance without committing themselves in their favour. The feeling was only natural, for the book was singularly damaging to the High Church party, from the light which it shed upon its tendencies. With the exception of Tract XC., it was perhaps the boldest, the most advanced, and the most uncompromising of all the productions of the school. Alike in its scornful reflections on Erastianism, in its bitter hate of everything that looked in the direction of Anglican Puritanism, in its daring vindication of Catholic authority, and its tolerance of what Protestants esteemed the worst errors of Rome, it was a startling re-

velation. To this day it remains one of the most instructive teachers as to the real spirit of the movement which caught so much of its inspiration from this brilliant writer, who had set himself, with the characteristic chivalry of youth, to be an apostle of reaction in this age of freedom and progress.

An undisguised hatred of the Reformers of the Anglican Church is one of the most prominent features in these *Remains*. This was not due to a Romanist feeling, for Froude appears to have had as keen an eye for the abuses and hypocrisies of the Romish system as the most ardent Protestant could desire. Though at one time he was possessed with a hope of possible reunion, it died away when he learned that Rome would yield nothing, and that if the English Church were to be reconciled, it must accept the Tridentine Creed, with the infallibility of the Church and every other dogma included. If there had been any leanings towards Rome previously, of which, however, there is no sign, that discovery ended them. "I never could be a Romanist," he says; "I never could think that all those things in Pius' creed are necessary to salvation. . . . They are wretched Tridentines everywhere." The anathemas troubled him most, for he could not accept the conclusion to which they would have forced him relative to his friends. But, besides his revulsion from them, he had a very keen sense of the practical results of Romanism. Some of the converts to Rome—Mr. Allies, for example—appear to have received their first favourable impressions of the system from their observations on the continent. With Mr. Hurrell Froude the effect was entirely opposite. Priests and people alike offended him: the one by their servility to the state, the other by the superficiality and hollowness

of their apparent devotion, and the grossness of their superstition. His general conclusion was that the Roman Catholic countries held the truth in unrighteousness. "I have seen priests laughing when at the confessional; and, indeed, it is plain that unless they habitually made light of very gross immorality, three-fourths of the population [of Naples] would be excommunicated. . . . The Church of England has fallen low, and will possibly be worse before it is better; but let the Whigs do their worst, they cannot sink us so deep as these people have allowed themselves to fall, while retaining all the superficials of a religious country."[1] It is possible that the stern logic of his system might ultimately have led him to Rome. Newman raised his voice with equal strength against Rome and her errors, and at length humbly recanted his protest, and yielded to the authority he had so vehemently denounced, and the principle which ultimately constrained him was at work in the mind of his friend. But so far from any signs of yielding in Froude, there was up to the time of his death the same determined resistance to the claims of the Papal See.

What perplexed many, and led them to fancy that he was a Romanist in disguise, was this bitter and almost malignant scorn he poured upon the Reformers and the Reformation. He writes to his friends that he is studying the history of the period, and he is manifestly doing so under a prepossession which makes Romanists appear increasingly attractive and Protestants more odious. As to the Reformation itself, "it is a limb badly set; it must be broken again in order to be righted." Of much that Englishmen have been accustomed to revere and

[1] Froude's *Remains*, vol. i. p. 294.

honour he is an unsparing iconoclast, while, on the other, he is prepared to rehabilitate the reputations of those whom Protestants hold in loathing. He has a kindly word for Gardiner and Bonner, while Pole is the character which he admires beyond all others in that troubled time. He set the evil example, followed by later Ritualists, of piling calumny and abuse upon the Reformers. To the poetry of Milton and the policy of Cranmer he has an equal aversion, since they are alike Protestant. It is true that he incidentally bestows a kind word upon Penry ; but it is not that he loves him more, only that he loves his Erastian persecutors less.

But Froude has his ideal. If he is equally caustic in his remarks upon Romanists and Protestants, he has his own idols, and they are Anglican Catholics. "The Church is to be remodelled according to the ideas of Charles I. and the Nonjurors." The aim of the movement could not well have been better described. A Church such as Laud would have had it was what these Tractarians desired to see, and their Tracts were meant to further this object. Laud had no intention of submitting to Rome, but he meant to establish the rule of "Catholic" antiquity and to restore a number of doctrines and practices of which the Reformers had got rid. The priest, the sacrament, the confessional were all assumed to be sanctioned by the voice of the "Catholic" Church, and ought, therefore, to have their place in the Anglican Church. As archbishop, he regarded himself as the head of an imposing hierarchy, whose power was to be increased by the awful sanctity with which priests were to be invested and the tremendous authority with which they were to be endowed. It was this for which Laud struggled, and it was this which the writers of the Tracts

had set before them as the object which was to be accomplished. What Laud had failed to do with an unscrupulous despot behind him, and with the rights of Parliament suspended in order to facilitate his plans, they hoped to accomplish by tracts and pamphlets, soothing poetry and polemic fiction, plain sermons for the people, and elaborate treatises for the learned. The conception was daring and original, but the sagacity of those who formed it and carried it out with such energy has been vindicated by the event. They set in action influences which have altered the tone of the clergy, changed the outward appearance of the Anglican Church, and its style of worship, and, in fact, produced a revival of energy which is one of the remarkable facts of this generation. Whether the ultimate result will be as satisfactory as present appearances would indicate is a more doubtful matter. But it is hardly to be questioned by any candid man that the little company, of whom Hurrell Froude was at first the centre, gave an entirely new direction to the current of ecclesiastical life within the Establishment.

That the people are inclined to tolerate in the nineteenth century a clerical tyranny which they spurned in the seventeenth seems hardly credible. Yet the actual facts seem at first to point in that direction. A few men, all of them young, and most of them as yet without ecclesiastical position, unsupported by their official superiors, set themselves to persuade the world that the current view of the Anglican Church, that which had prevailed for three centuries, which had been accepted by the great majority of its divines, which was adopted by its own dignitaries, and in which its members had been educated, was utterly wrong.

In doing this they opposed themselves to the prejudices of the people, the conservatism of the Church, the strongest political and social instincts of statesmen, and the earnest religious convictions of Evangelical Protestants, whether in their own Church or the Dissenting communities. If there was a belief more deeply rooted in the mind of the English nation at the time than another, it was that they were a Protestant people, and theirs *par excellence* the Protestant Church. These would-be guides of public opinion set themselves boldly to defy and, if possible, overcome this feeling, and with it all those rights and principles of which Protestantism has ever been the inspiration and the bulwark. They flouted the name of liberty, scoffed at the rising spirit of religious tolerance, treated the aspirations after progress as though they were a rebellion against the law of God and the order of Providence. In all this they were trusting to a theory the foundation of which was on the sand, as the most eminent and consistent of them ultimately found. But what was lacking in strength of argument was made up by audacity of temper and boldness of assertion. If they were ever troubled by a doubt as to their position, it was certainly never suffered to appear. The Anglican was the Holy Catholic Church in these realms, and in their school were its true representatives. In vain did the Romanists insist that the authority of the later was equal to that of the earlier Councils, and equally in vain did the Dissenter maintain that the liberty to reject the errors of Rome implied liberty also for him to reject that of Canterbury. They had decided that their Church had found the true mean between those conflicting claims, and that her voice alone was to be obeyed. "Hear the church" was the text of a cele-

brated sermon from one who, though not absolutely identified with the school, and disapproving of its later developments, was long in earnest sympathy with its principles and aims. It is the keynote of all the Tracts.

IX.

The carrying out of this principle meant the reversal of a judgment which the nation had long since pronounced with such emphasis that it was supposed that controversy upon the points involved had been closed. The real meaning of the Lord's Supper, the functions of the priest, the entire penitential system, including confession, penance, and absolution, were supposed to have been settled. The Tracts boldly re-opened them all, on the ground that much which had been treated as Romish error was grand "Catholic" truth, which the Church of England had never renounced. "The glory of the English Church," it was maintained by them, "is that it has taken the *via media*, as it has been called." It lies between the "so-called Reformers and the Romanists." If it was objected, as naturally it was, that the Articles at all events were decidedly opposed to such a view, the answer was that the true mind of the Church was to be ascertained rather from the liturgy, which was to be constantly used and had a permanent character, which did not belong to Articles that were intended only as polemical protests against the errors of the day. There came a time, as the views of the writers became more developed, when the Articles were dealt with in another fashion, and when—in contempt alike of the plain meaning of language and of the whole testimony of history—it was gravely argued that the Articles were capable of a Romish interpreta-

tion. But the original contention was that "the liturgy, as coming down from the Apostles, is the depository of their complete teaching; while the Articles are polemical, and, except as they embody the creeds, are only protests against certain definite errors." The object of the Tracts, therefore, was to use every hint that the liturgy supplied and expand it to the utmost for the exaltation of the ministerial office, the elevation of the sacraments as "the sources of Divine grace," the revival of practices long disused as pieces of Romish superstition. "Methodism and Romanism," we are told in the preface of the first volume, "are in different ways the refuge of those whom the Church stints of the gifts of grace; they are the foster mothers of abandoned children." These writers set themselves to the supply of this lamentable deficiency, and the recovery for their Church of the position it had lost through this unfaithfulness to the trust committed to it.

With a few exceptions these Tracts are not brilliant productions. Apart from those contributed by Cardinal Newman himself, they would soon have passed into oblivion. It may be doubted whether they are now much known except by students. They laid the foundation of a school now both numerous and powerful, but it is open to question whether, among those who have accepted the conclusions they set forth, there are many who are careful to examine the reasonings by which they are sustained. Reasoning is indeed a doubtful term to apply to these pieces of superb dogmatism. Specious subtleties are introduced in the working out of the teaching, but the ultimate basis on which everything is made to rest is the authority of the "Catholic Church," and for that we have to trust to the

assertion of the writers themselves. What they accept is Catholic; what they reject is not Catholic. Vincentius Lirinensis has given forth the dictum by which they abide. But if a question be raised as to the prerogative in virtue of which this writer is entitled to lay down an abiding rule of faith for all times, there is no reply. These teachers have submitted themselves to his guidance, and so must we. If we proceed to take to pieces his celebrated maxim, we find ourselves again required to yield the same deference to our teachers, who must be allowed to introduce the exceptions which bristle all round a principle laid down as simple, satisfactory, and decisive. From the "ubique" we must leave out the lands where heresy is dominant; from the "omnibus" we must exclude the heretics themselves; from the "semper" the period prior to the full development of the system for which this Catholic sanction is claimed.

It is not pretended, it must be remembered, that there is scriptural authority for every idea or right which the Church is thus required to accept. The law is invented for the very purpose of determining what additions may legitimately be made to the New Testament teaching. The apostolic age is therefore, *ex hypothesi*, excluded from the "semper;" and in ascertaining the mind of Catholic antiquity we are to give no heed to the time when the Church was in its freshness and purity. As little notice are we to take of Dissent, however widespread and however influential, but are to regard the decision of a majority, however narrow and by whatever means obtained, as the unbiassed judgment of all. All this we are to accept because these exponents of Anglo-Catholicism have so decreed. "The multitude of men cannot teach or guide themselves; and an injunction given

them to depend on their private judgment, cruel in itself, is doubly hurtful, as throwing them on such teachers as speak daringly and promise largely, and not only aid but supersede individual exertion." So say these writers in their preface. In order to deliver the unhappy victims of this liberty from such "blind leaders of the blind," they speak even more daringly and promise even more largely. As clergy of the Catholic Church they hold the commission to teach, and they will instruct men, leading them in the safe and pleasant paths which neither Romanists nor Dissenters know. As Archbishop Whately cleverly put it, "The mass of Christians are called on to believe and do what is essential to Christianity, in implicit reliance on the reports of the respective pastors as to what certain deep theological antiquarians have *reported* to *them* respecting the *reports* given by certain ancient fathers of *reports* current in their times concerning apostolical usages and institutions."

There is something extremely offensive in the arrogance which first maintains that the Church must decide everything, and then quietly slips in the idea that "we," the writers, or the school, express the will of the Church. And that is what the claim of these Tractarian writers really meant. "In a word," says Professor Rogers, in one of those keen and incisive exposures of the system which were among the most valuable contributions to the Protestant side of the controversy, "we find the Church is just Mr. Newman or Dr. Pusey, not unbecomingly disguised in the habiliments of a somewhat antiquated lady, and uttering their 'private judgments' as veritable oracles." They make every endeavour to shelter themselves behind venerable names and recognized authority. They give us wonderful *catenæ* of

opinions taken from the works of Anglican divines of acknowledged reputation, but they themselves select the divines to whom they appeal, and the particular dicta in their writings by which they are content to be guided. Take them on what point you please, whether it be the opinion of the Fathers, or the tradition of antiquity, or the decree of the Catholic Church, everywhere there is a selection, and it is by them that it is made. "We" restrain freedom and determine at what point it becomes license. "We" pronounce what dogma and what particular phase of dogma is Catholic. "We" decide how far it is expedient that restoration should be carried, and when and how the revival should be effected. "We" are Protestants against the Romish Church, but we are "Catholic" to all the world beside, and "whatever be our private differences with the Roman Catholics, we may join with them in condemning Socinians, Baptists, Independents, Quakers, and the like. But God forbid that we should ally ourselves with the offspring of heresy and schism in our contest with any branches of the Holy Church which maintain the *foundation*, whatever may be their incidental corruptions."[1] The spectacle of this little company entrenching themselves in their narrow territory and insisting that it alone is Christendom, while on either side is the uncovenanted land of the Puritan or the schismatic, has its ludicrous aspect. The insular pride which this pretension exhibits is, however, almost the only English element about the movement which is constantly described as Anglicanism.

The inculcation of the theory of reserve, which was early made so prominent in the teachings of the Tracts,

[1] *Tracts for the Times*, vol. vi.; *Records of the Church*, No. 25, pp. 8, 9.

is, on the contrary, essentially un-, or shall we not rather say, anti-English. Before the appearance of the two tracts on this subject, there had been a gradual awakening of the public mind to the tendencies of the series of tracts which had been issued with such frequency, and were marked by such unity of purpose as to indicate that a new ecclesiastical school had arisen. The first feeling which was provoked was that of contempt. That clergymen of a Church which was regarded as Protestant should claim a special Divine commission, and in virtue of the authority thus intrusted to them enforce the rights of the priesthood upon a generation which had felt the influence of the first French Revolution, and which was seething with aspirations after progress and liberty, seemed little else than a *lusus naturæ*. If ever a theory seemed to be born out of due season, it was this new idea of apostolical succession and sacramental efficacy born at Oxford in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Some treated it as a wild outburst of clerical fanaticism; others esteemed it the natural though overstrained reaction against the reforming energy of Liberalism, and the protest against the achievements it had already effected. The excitement produced soon began to gather in intensity, spreading from the university to the country parsonages, with which the university is so closely connected, and gradually extending to the outer world. Some were amused, many contemptuous, others indignant and alarmed. But few realized the seriousness of the procedure, or had the faintest idea whereunto it would grow. With the appearance of successive tracts, in which the aims of the school became more apparent, the feeling deepened. But the two tracts on *Reserve in the Communication of Religious Knowledge* excited an alarm

much keener than had been felt before. Romeward tendencies had been suspected and charged before, but here was a confirmation of every allegation. What was this theory of an esoteric doctrine for the initiated, and an exoteric for the common people, or for those who, from some prejudice or other cause, were not prepared to receive the full truth, but the very principle of Rome in its worst form?

It was bad enough that the words of our Lord should have been perverted in order to justify such an "economy" in the teaching of truth, and that before all others the doctrines of the atonement and of the Holy Spirit should have been selected as those to which it was proper that it should be applied. It was worse that for Anglican priests should be claimed the right of deciding when and how far this reserve should be carried, since this claim introduced an entirely new element of doubt into the relations between the teacher and the taught. The preacher who fancies that with him it remains to decide how much of what God has shown him he is to give to the people, who arrogates to himself the right of manipulating the gospel as though it were his to determine how much of the Divine message is suited to those to whom it is addressed, and who even insists that it is not necessary to give prominence to the doctrine of the atonement and of the work of the Holy Ghost, must have a very different view of the duties of his office from that of the great Apostle, who felt that "necessity was laid upon him, and woe was unto him if he preached not the gospel." The one was really an ambassador for Christ, who believed that the more fully he set forth the story of his Master's love, the better did he discharge the trust committed to him. The other is a priest, who assumes that

some special authority has been given to him, and that it is for him to determine when, how, and in what proportions the knowledge he possesses should be given to the people.

But while this impressed all thoughtful people, still more painful was the utter loss of confidence in the defenders of such a practice, and the consequent apprehension that, even when using strong Protestant language, they might still be secretly the servants of Rome, and employing all means in their power in order to advance her interests. Archbishop Whately put the first point with characteristic force and point.

"What would be the natural and reasonable reply of the people to teachers who avow such principles as these? Should it not be, 'We thank you for the warning. You have disclosed your method of procedure: and that is of such a nature that no reasonable man would choose to become your disciple.' He who professes the allowableness and duty of having one gospel for the mass of the people and another for the initiated few, and is believed in *that* profession, could not wonder to find that he is believed in nothing else." [1]

From the time that this doctrine was broached, all disavowals of sympathy with Rome were treated as idle, if not delusive words. But clear-headed men had long seen that, whether from inability to perceive the drift of their movement, or of *malice prepense*, the Tractarians were gradually leading men on to Rome. One of the cleverest and most telling *brochures* of the time [2] was a Pastoral purporting to come from the Pope, and done with such admirable skill that, at first, numbers were deceived by it. In this His Holiness gratefully acknowledges his

[1] *Cautions for the Times*, p. 222. [2] Ibid. p. 252.

obligation to such faithful workers, while he gently chides the indiscretions which had revealed too much of their secret thought. It expressed a widespread belief not only as to the effect of the writings, in which it was correct, but also as to the intentions of the writers, in which all the evidence warrants us in saying that it was wrong. The secession to Rome, when it came, was supposed to justify these previous suspicions. But in truth it was only the logical outcome of principles whose issue was perceived from the first by all save those who believed in them and taught them. They were not intentionally disloyal to the Church at whose altars they ministered, and they went where, at first, they had no thought of going. Until this fact is faced, the rulers of the Anglican Church will never understand the real nature of the difficulty with which they have to grapple. One of the venerable leaders of the school still remains in the Established Church, and has round him a more numerous and not less daring band of followers than ever, and there is not even an attempt to dispossess him or them. It may be that their extreme doctrines and practices are condemned, but it is not easy to maintain that there is no foundation in the formularies for that principle of authority on which the whole system rests. Where that is, there are all the evils of ecclesiasticism, priestism, and sacramentarianism in embryo, and waiting only suitable opportunity for full development. The Tractarian and Ritualist struggle is only one phase of the ever returning conflict between Christ and human authority, and it is a war in which there can be no neutrality or half-hearted allegiance. It is this that gives such significance to the struggle which the Oxford movement inaugurated, and in the midst of which we

find ourselves to-day. Behind the question of rites and robes, of fasts and festivals, even of priests and sacraments, is the far deeper issue of authority. There is but one rule which can be opposed to that of Rome, and it is that of Christ. As the story of this movement shows, no canon of Catholicity avails those who have compromised the liberty which Christ gives. Professor Rogers well laid down the only rule which can safely be opposed to the canon of Vincentius Lirinensis, when he said that the apostles shall be our "omnes," their writings our "ubique," their age our "semper."

LECTURE V.

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In 1826 John Henry Newman was elected a fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, succeeding to the place which was vacated by Thomas Arnold. At that time, and for some years before and after, Oriel was the centre of much of the intellectual activity of the University. As we run through the list of distinguished men who during this brilliant period of its history mingled in its Combination Room, or gather up the hints we find scattered through the biographies of some who have passed away, or the narratives of others who still remain and have given accounts of those collegiate days which have since produced such impression on the world, it is impossible not to regret that the references are so brief, and that no one has preserved fuller record of the men and the incidents that had so large a share in the training of those hereafter destined to be leaders of religious thought and ecclesiastical party. It is only necessary to mention Whately, Hampden, and above all Arnold, on the one side, Keble, Pusey, Newman on the other, to say nothing of such names as Copleston, Davison, and Hawkins, less known to the world outside, but hardly less distinguished in their respective departments—to show that from Oriel of that day pro-

ceeded the great intellectual forces which moulded the subsequent history of the Anglican Church, and whose influence has not yet expended itself.

Apparently the conflict of the times has been between the Protestant and Catholic, or the Evangelical and High Church party in its various phases and degrees of development. The Church Association and the Church Union alike would repudiate the Broad Church theory and those by whom it was advocated, and the supporters of both would in all probability forget their fierce enmities and unite once again, as they have done at least on three great occasions already, for the suppression of those whose principles they alike hold in abhorrence; but the power which has supplied the most effectual counteraction to the aggressions of priestism is the Liberalism of which the Broad Church is the representative. It is equally true on the opposite side, that but for it and the influence it has exerted on public opinion, even in the Church itself, the extreme form of High Churchism would have had but little chance of the tolerance which it at present enjoys. Still, strange, and even paradoxical as it may appear, it is in the Liberal spirit which Broad Churchmen have fostered that sacerdotalism has found its most resolute and powerful foe. Cardinal Newman and Dean Stanley are both right. As the former says, the Liberals created the spirit to which he succumbed, and it was they who drove him from the Church; but the Dean is equally correct when he asserts that the "blows which were intended by the Oxford decrees to have made it impossible for him to retain his position were warded off, I will not say entirely, but in a very large measure, by the self-denying efforts of the Liberal party."

The explanation of all this will become apparent in the course of this review.

Evangelicals have no doubt taken a leading part in opposition; have organized a more public and more noisy resistance; have been more anxious to convert the Church into a party preserve; have inspired and sustained all the movements in the courts of law with that view. They might have done more than that had they been thoroughly loyal to those grand Protestant ideas of which they assume to be the best exponents and the natural guardians. But their position in the Establishment has compromised them. They conceded too much to the adversary to be able to present a firm, unbroken front to his attack. A subtle sympathy with many of his ideas early began to discover itself, and robbed them of much of their strength. Gradually their force has been weakened as the rising clergy of their party have more or less succumbed to the influence of priestly theory, or been overborne by the exigencies of their clerical position. If they have not fallen away to the opposite side, they have done their utmost to infuse into their Evangelical teachings such a delicate aroma of ecclesiasticism as may please the tender susceptibilities of moderate High Churchmen, with whom they are so desirous to cultivate friendly relations. The result is that the opposing force of the Evangelical party has in all its moral elements been greatly reduced. It maintains its associations, it institutes prosecutions, it launches invective and denunciations, but it does not carry with it the heart even of the Protestant people, numbers of whom have a lurking suspicion that the ecclesiastical spirit and priestly temper, which are at the root of the whole evil, may be found in the one party as well as in

the other. The exclusiveness and arrogance of the so-called Catholics are their most obnoxious features, and certainly on this score the Evangelicals have but slight justification for reproaching them.

It is in the nature of things that the Broad Church party should be the champion of Ritualists when assailed. The spirit to which it owes its existence engenders a chivalrous sympathy by which men of the most opposite opinions benefit. It is bound, if it would not be untrue to its own instincts and false to its professions, to stand by all parties whose right to a place within the Established Church is challenged, and therefore it condemns the suits which have resulted in the imprisonment of sincere, though mistaken, clergymen, just as it was opposed to the first of those ecclesiastical proceedings—that instituted for the expulsion of Mr. Gorham. But the very principle on which it does this strikes at the very root of all sacerdotal pretensions. Catholics can hardly be thankful to those who would befriend them by insisting on a true catholicity which at one fell swoop would get rid of the claims of their Church, the authority of their priesthood, and the supernatural grace of their sacraments. Rather must they see here an antagonist with whom there is no possibility of accommodation. The fact that they owe so much of their impunity to rivals, whose tolerance and liberality they would requite by using the first opportunity to expel them from the Church, is not likely to make the seeming alliance into which they are sometimes forced at all more palatable.

I.

The Liberalism which has always been the aversion of the High Church party may fairly claim Arnold as its leading representative in modern times. Latitudinarianism was nothing new, but Latitudinarianism of Dr. Arnold's type, if such a term can be properly used in relation to him, was as far removed from that of the Feathers' Tavern or of Paley, or even of some of the present leaders of the school, as from Tractarianism itself. A founder of a school he was not, nor did he ever aspire to such a position, but on that very account he may be regarded as the fairest representative of the Broad Church. For the object of the party is not to assert the predominance of a special set of opinions, but to insist that the National Church shall be the home of all varieties of opinion. This aim itself necessarily brings it into conflict with other schools who hold views more or less exclusive; but its antagonism is directed against the exclusiveness rather than the opinions. Its members may believe in the Trinity, but not the less do they earnestly oppose the Athanasian Creed. They may even have sympathy with certain aspects of the Calvinism for which the Evangelicals contend; but as soon as any attempt is made to set up Calvinistic theories as the law of the Establishment they rebel. They are intense Protestants; but they would not even safeguard Protestantism by expelling from the National Church the men by whose teachings its principles are undermined. They thus naturally sympathize with the defendants in every suit, and while they receive nothing but condemnation, have only kindly sentiments for all except persecutors.

In these respects Arnold was pre-eminently fitted to be their representative. He was a man of active intellect, of wide and varied culture, of rare independence of thought, and of rare courage in expression and action, but, beyond and above all, of a large and generous heart. His influence was that of character much more than of intellect. Whatever men thought of his system, they were forced to honour and respect himself. Few men have ever fought their way out of such a fierce and malignant unpopularity into a position of such wide-spread affectionate esteem. The prejudices of High Churchmen, who hated his stern outspoken condemnation of their Catholic aims; of Evangelicals, who distrusted his views of inspiration, his principles of Scripture interpretation, and in general his whole conception as to creeds; and of the clergy generally, who disliked his real, deeply rooted Liberalism, were conquered by the irresistible goodness of the man. Unlike some who are broad to the very verge of licence in matters of opinion, but at the same time narrow, and even intolerant, in all their sympathies, Arnold's breadth was distinctively that of the heart. He honoured all good men although he was unsparing in his attacks upon the errors of all systems. No one therefore could be more fully representative of the school, of which it was said by one who was in strong sympathy with it thirty years ago, before its more recent developments had somewhat changed its spirit and attitude, "Its distinctive character is the desire for comprehension; its watchwords are charity and toleration; its adherents love the Church of England for that very peculiarity which has most provoked the criticism of its detractors. For they believe that the superficial differences between

Christians are as nothing in comparison with their essential agreement. And they are willing that the portals of the Church should be flung as widely open as the gate of heaven."[1]

It is hardly needful to point out that this view may be pushed to such an extreme as to reduce all theological opinion to the level of uncertain speculation, about which experts may feel a certain degree of interest, but which cannot be expected to exert any influence on the practical business of life, or the formation of religious character. But, on the other hand, it may be associated with a faith in the vital truths of the gospel, and especially in Christ Himself, so real and absorbing that it causes all other opinions to be regarded as the small dust of the balance. The former was the position of the memorialists of the Feathers' Tavern, the latter that of Dr. Arnold. Latitudinarianism of his type had been unknown to the Anglican Church before, except in some rare examples, and even these were looked on with but little favour by some of the parties who were struggling for ascendancy in the Church at the time when the head master of Rugby startled the ecclesiastical world by his liberal views of reform and comprehension. In this respect Arnold differed from many who had gone before him. After the failure of the well-meant efforts of Bishop Burnet and his friends to widen the constitution of the Establishment, little or nothing had been done in the direction of comprehension. Even liberal-minded men were content to enjoy their own ease and freedom within the Church, whose tolerant spirit they did their utmost to exhibit, and

[1] Conybeare on "Church Parties." *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xcviii. p. 330.

took no active measures to secure a reform in its constitution. Arnold was not satisfied with this unaggressive Liberalism. He would have made the Church conform to his ideal, and have extended it by the comprehension in which he gloried. With him the Church was the nation, and he would so far have widened the terms of conformity as to make facts correspond to his ideal. With such consistency did he carry out this view that he would have excluded from national privilege those who, like the Jews, could have no place in the national Christianity. But these very cravings after a National Church made him intent on making the terms of conformity so wide that all except those who denied Christianity itself should be included among its members. These active endeavours after reform distinguished him even from the most liberal Churchmen before his time. But the party which may be accurately described as Latitudinarian is the party of Paley, and others of similar tendencies. From these he was distinctly separated by the fervour of his piety as much as by his theological opinion.

II.

Thomas Arnold was the first of a noble band who not only lifted up the public schools of England to a position worthy of themselves, but have associated some of the most perfect culture in the Anglican Church with the cause of Liberalism. The Head Masters of England have for some time past been honourably distinguished by their superiority to the prejudices of their order, and by their desire to bring their Church more into harmony with the advancing

tendencies of the times. The wiser and more liberal policy by which the bench of Bishops has of late years often separated itself from the evil traditions of former days, and incurred the censure of the inferior clergy, is due to the presence amongst its members of those who have caught the tone of the scholastic profession, and for that tone England is indebted entirely to the great Head Master of Rugby. His position at that school, the simple earnestness with which he set himself to work out in it his own theory of Church and State, gave him a much more extended influence than he could possibly have commanded as a country clergyman or an Oxford professor. Those trained under him caught something of his nobility of nature, his superiority to narrow sectarianism, his distrust of all religious conventionalism, his generous comprehensiveness. Between the master and the disciples there are differences on which it will be necessary to comment. Many of them have certainly been so far untrue to the spirit if not to the letter of his teachings that they have attached a value to the mechanical appliances of the Establishment, and been ready to make any sacrifice to preserve them, even though they are manifestly being used to perpetuate and extend a system which he held to be subversive of Christianity itself. It is hardly credible that the idolatry of an institution would so completely have enslaved Arnold as to cause him to shut his eyes to facts; or that he would have gone on protesting that the Establishment was the best defence against priestcraft at the very time when its prestige was being employed to secure for the priests a power they have not enjoyed in England since the days of the Reformation, and which they cer-

tainly could not acquire as the ministers of a voluntary Church. But, despite this strange infatuation of some who call themselves Liberals, and yet refuse to carry out in ecclesiastical practice those principles of righteousness on which they insist everywhere else, these disciples of Dr. Arnold have often proved themselves the sturdy friends of liberty, and in the work they have done we trace the influence of one of the best men of the century.

That such a man should have been exposed to so fierce a storm as that which for years beat around his head may at first excite some surprise, but the more closely the circumstances are considered, the more quickly will any feeling of the kind subside. With all his gentleness of spirit, Arnold was singularly outspoken and courageous. He had the susceptibility of an intense nature, which is nowhere more conspicuous than in the constant expressions in his correspondence of an anxiety to be reconciled to those friends, his relations with whom had been disturbed by differences of opinion. But the self-same qualities which made him thus tender and considerate to individuals made him also uncompromising in his resistance to the errors of their teachings. A critic, at once tender and discriminating, says of him: "It is the combination we admire so much in Arnold—the moral greatness, which was his first nature; and the Christian greatness, which was his second. By the first he was born more allied unto St. Paul, by the second he became of kindred with St. John."[1] The comparison ignores the fact that John was a Boanerges, and that the passionate force of character which made him so tender and loving im-

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxxxi. p. 199.

parted to him the boldness of a lion when error was to be resisted, or wrong to be overcome. He sufficiently represents the type of character to which Arnold belonged, and Paul is only introduced because so many fail to perceive identity of qualities which, though they assume different phases, are radically one. Arnold was misjudged, as many a man has been beside, because of a strength of utterance which was due neither to rhetorical art nor sectarian passion, but solely to the force imparted by his desire to present the truth to others with the vividness with which it was apprehended by his own mind. Of course those who so judged him did not know the man, and they were not alone in their inability to suspect the singular tenderness of spirit which was behind, and which comes out with such beauty in his letters. So lofty was his nature, so capable of affection that should be at once strong and expansive, that Archbishop Whately says of him: "He was attached to his family as if he had no friends, to his friends as if he had no family, and to his country as if he had no friends or relations." Yet those who knew him only as a fierce assailant of errors which appeared to him to be threatening the gospel itself fancied him severe, passionate, and bigoted, and attacked him accordingly.

III.

The points against which Arnold directed his criticisms were regarded by his opponents as the most precious things in a great spiritual inheritance, and his attacks upon them were resented accordingly. The idea of the High Church party in particular was that, in an age of excitement and innovation, the first duty

of loyal Churchmen and Christians was to make strong every bulwark, while here was one who, instead of strengthening the defences, was actually prepared to surrender the key of the position. The Athanasian Creed appeared to them the strongest buttress of orthodoxy. Dr. Arnold would actually have dispensed with it altogether, as a stumbling-block in the way of devout Unitarians, who might otherwise have found their way to the truth which it is supposed especially to conserve and enforce. Though he could say, "I do not believe the damnatory clauses under any qualification given of them, except such as substitute for them propositions of a wholly different character," he reconciled himself, by a process of reasoning it is not very easy to follow, to its retention and use. Still he objected to the Creed. That was enough to lead many to the conclusion that he had his doubts about the doctrine, even if he had not utterly rejected it.

The objections to his theology were, however, not more keen than those to his Church policy. His liberal ideas found but few sympathisers. His attempts to serve the Church, which did not number among her sons one with a more enlightened loyalty or a grander conception of the work entrusted to it, exposed him to a persecution not less intolerant in temper and vexatious in the penalties which it inflicted because it was not able to proceed to extremities. Lampooned in newspapers, denounced from pulpits, attacked in his school as well as in his writings, deserted by not a few of his former friends, seriously injured both as author and teacher, perhaps the climax was reached when the Archbishop of Canterbury refused him permission to preach at Lambeth at the consecration of his friend Dr. Stanley.

It is not easy to believe that any party could so influence the mind of the present Primate as to cause him to perpetrate an injustice such as that done to Dr. Arnold by his predecessor. All parties are profiting by the more liberal tone which is prevalent, which Dr. Arnold himself contributed so largely to produce, and for which he suffered so severely. It is hardly fair to reproach the Administration because such a man received none of the honours of the Church. Men who boldly contend for reform must make up their minds for sacrifice; certainly the prizes of an Establishment will not, unless in very exceptional circumstances, fall to them in early life; and it must not be forgotten that Arnold died before reaching the age at which men are ordinarily called to the episcopate. Whether, had his life been prolonged, he would have received this just recognition of his worth it is idle to speculate. Certain it is that the Church of England suffered a more severe loss than its friends understood in the early removal of one who was so capable of rendering still nobler service, and who especially had shown a capacity and willingness to grapple with the errors which are robbing it of its real strength, equalled by no man except his friend Archbishop Whately.

Dr. Arnold clearly detected the folly of those who were carried away by an apparent reaction on behalf of the Church and Church principles due to the early Tractarian movement. To numbers who were disquieted by the revolutionary tendency of the times, and fancied that this new appeal to Church sentiment was to erect a breakwater against it, Pusey, Newman, and Keble appeared as heaven-sent saviours of the Church and religion. The laity were not very deeply affected

by this sentiment, but with the clergy it was all powerful. It was in harmony with the spirit which the Prayer Book had nurtured; it gave the true position to their order; it encouraged the hope that they might be able to resist the encroachments of the reforming temper which had gone abroad. The political spirit of the time was in favour of the new school.

IV.

A strong reaction, due to causes which have no relation to our subject, had followed the great Liberal triumph of 1832, and the new Oxford School had the credit of contributing to its growth by the revival of the wavering loyalty of the Anglican Church. That this was one factor in the production of the remarkable change of opinion which within nine years raised Sir Robert Peel from the position of leader of a discouraged, impotent minority to be the head of one of the most powerful governments England had seen, may be granted without supposing that the Protestant feeling of the nation had been quenched. Beyond a limited circle there was no disposition to adopt the policy of the Tracts and conform the Establishment to the ideal of Laud. The truth is, the ultimate tendency of the movement was perceived by very few. The Evangelical party condemned it, but their sagacity was not equal to their zeal, and their protest was discredited because of the extravagant form which it generally assumed, and because also of the undefined distrust of the churchmanship of the school. On the other hand were many influences which predisposed various classes to sympathy, inducing a tacit aquiescence in the pro-

ceedings of the Tractarians where there was not open approval. Numbers who had no intention of strengthening the hands of the priest were glad to see introduced into the worship of the Anglican Church that mystic sanctity with which the altar and the sacrament were invested by the Oxford divines. Others, to whom the modern developments of Ritualism are extremely distasteful, were attracted by the æstheticism, the general air of culture, and the strong Church principles of the new school, and did not stop to inquire whither its leaders would conduct them. The cry of "The Church in danger" had touched the chivalry and awakened the zeal of a still more numerous party, and they rushed to the support of those who claimed to be *par excellence* its friends and defenders.

For the moment the Conservative Philistinism of the country was on the side of the Oxford party, as was evidenced by the fact that it enjoyed at this period the condescending patronage of *The Times*. With characteristic inability to grasp great principles, or to discern the ultimate tendencies of a movement based on a conception of the Church utterly opposed to the miserable Erastianism of English politicians, it saw in the bold and self-devoted men who had undertaken to rally the nation to the banner of the old Church a number of ardent enthusiasts who would do great good by their zeal, and whose excesses would be counteracted by the practical sense of the people. This was the prevailing sentiment of the section of society which is possessed by the belief that English opinion is represented by its clubs, drawing-rooms, and coteries, and therefore perpetually furnishes new proofs of its shallowness, its inability to lead, its incapacity to understand even the most mani-

fest signs of the times. It cannot be said ever to have adopted Tractarian opinions, though there have been seasons when a certain Tractarian tone has been the fashion. More than once society has endeavoured to use this ecclesiasticism as its tool, and it did so at this stage of its history. Its extravagances were regarded as amiable weaknesses, which were to be condoned in consideration of the service it would render to the party of privilege. Tory politicians hailed it as providing a new and much-needed defence for the threatened Establishment. Many who had been sincerely alarmed by the spread of Liberal ideas, although they still retained their strong antipathy to Rome, welcomed the attempt to establish Catholic authority independent of, and indeed antagonistic to, the Papal See. In short, the party of stolid resistance to all popular advance were glad to hail a mediæval reaction which yet had on it the glow of the nineteenth century and the charm of novelty, in the hope that by its aid they might baffle the hopes of the detested Radicals.

It was to a people, therefore, specially disinclined to listen that Arnold addressed warnings which showed the sagacity of a true statesman as well as the liberality of an enlightened Christian. Considering the manly testimony which he so courageously bore as to the encroachments of an error which has since caused such serious trouble to the rulers of the Establishment, and has now involved it in difficulties out of which it is not easy to discover a way of escape, it is curious that Arnold did not look upon some of the outward manifestations of Tractarianism with the abhorrence or dread that many earnest Protestants expressed. In this respect, as in others, he was far

removed from the Evangelicals, though equally resolute in his resistance to the new school. External symbols troubled them, the vital principles at issue alone disturbed him. It must come as a surprise to those who know him as a most strenuous opponent of the Tractarian teaching to find him saying: "Daily Church services, frequent ceremonies, memorials of our Christian calling continually presented to our notice in crosses, wayside oratories, commemorations of holy men of all times and countries; the doctrine of the communion of saints practically taught; religious orders—especially of women—of different kinds, under different rules, delivered only from the snare and sin of perpetual vows—all these, most of which are of some efficacy for good even in a corrupt Church, belong no less to the true Church, they may be purely beneficial."[1] He would therefore have met the new teachers with a frank recognition and acceptance of all that was good in their system, and dissociated it from the pernicious error on which it was assumed to be based. The Ritualists have since adopted the same principle in their practical work. They do not refuse to borrow from the most extreme Protestants instruments which appear to them likely to be useful. This was precisely the course the Broad Churchmen would have pursued in relation not only to them but to the Romish Church also. The contention of Dr. Arnold is that the branches which some overzealous Protestants are anxious to destroy, are not in fact directly connected with the corrupt root at all and that by confining attention to them a double evil is done, for not only is the root-error untouched, but it is allowed to get the advantage resulting from associa-

[1] *Sermons*, vol. iv., Preface, p. lvi.

tion with practices in which some see beauty and goodness, and from which they derive even spiritual benefit.

V.

The Protestantism of Arnold was not narrow and sectarian—full of intense hatred to Rome and desirous of finding in prophecy intimations of its approaching downfall, but at the same time just as ready to set up another pope in the place of him whom it desired to dethrone. It was the Protestantism of free thought, which sought to emancipate the human mind from every form of bondage, which resented the pretensions of the priest as an invasion of Christian liberty, and with a holy jealousy opposed every attempt to substitute the Church for Christ and the traditions of men for the teachings of His gospel. He did not live in perpetual fear of committing himself, for he had no principle which he was afraid to test, and there was no institution whose security he would have preferred to the truth, and no calamity he would have deprecated more than the triumph of priestism over human intelligence and Christian conscience. Between a Protestantism of his type and the Oxford school there could be only deadly war. And it was the only kind of Protestantism which had any prospect of offering a successful resistance.

It is curious as well as instructive to look back now to some of the pointed and incisive attacks which he made upon the teachings of this new school in its early days. The contrast between his attitude and that which the Broad Church party has taken since is not more striking than the directness with which he goes to the heart of

the subject is refreshing in these times of smooth speaking. With all his craving for a true national Church, he was too honest to desire that the semblance should be preserved if the reality was gone, and had too much of statesmanlike insight to suppose it possible if desirable. The comprehension of Dissenters he did not regard merely as something to be hoped for and sought after, but as an absolute necessity if the Establishment was to be maintained. A national Church from which half the nation had gone astray had no attractions for him. There was the fact—very unpalatable to him, but too patent to be denied or ignored—that a large proportion of the Protestantism of the nation, including its more robust and vigorous elements, was not in the National Church, and was not there because of conscientious objections either to its doctrine, or its polity, or its relations to the State. The idea that the lost nationality could be restored by calling Dissenters "non-conforming members of the Church of England" does not seem to have dawned upon him. He realized too fully the meaning of Dissent to attempt to impose on himself by mere phrases, or to wound Dissenters by applying to them a name which was a satire on their whole history. But his fixed conviction was that Nonconformists must be reconciled, or the days of the Establishment were numbered, and he dreaded the Tractarian movement because it tended to produce still further alienation. "This fancied reaction in favour of the High Church party," he says, "seems to me the merest illusion in the world; it is like that phantom which Minerva sent to Hector to tempt him to his fate, by making him believe that Deiphobus was at hand to help him." [1]

[1] *Arnold's Life*, Letter lxxxv.

The attitude of all the parties has unfortunately changed since that time. What Arnold regarded as "the merest illusion" appears to not a few of those who would claim him as their leader as the most substantial of supports. They are content to utilize the sentiment which, if it mean anything, is the revival of an old superstition in order to perpetuate the Establishment. Under its shadow priestcraft may grow up in rank luxuriance; by its influence reaction, both political and theological, may be strengthened; and by its operation a large part of the people, and that the section most intent on progress everywhere, may be doomed to political inequality. But the National Church must be preserved though it has long since lost all valid pretensions to nationality, though certainly it cannot long retain its nominal dignity, and though, for the sake of the brief tenure of privilege, which is all that is possible, a teaching must be tolerated the effects of which will be permanently mischievous. But all considerations, whether of justice or expediency, of political right or religious principle, are to be subordinated to the paramount necessity of maintaining an Established Church. This was not the policy of the man who exhibits in highest form all the noblest tendencies of the Broad Church. He not only did more justice to the claims of Nonconformity, but he also more clearly perceived the reactionary character of the movement by which he found himself confronted, and whose influence he regarded as destructive of all that he felt to be most precious in Christianity, and fatal to all his cherished hopes for the progress, the liberty, and the elevation of humanity.

VI.

Remembering that Arnold was taken away before the conflict reached its full intensity, and never had the opportunity of taking public action against the movement he so much hated and dreaded beyond the exposure of its errors and fallacies in his sermons; that while he left innumerable admirers, he founded no school of thought, and that in the subsequent struggle there has been no party which has fully carried out his views, it might seem as though he were assigned too prominent a place in this sketch. But the opinions of Arnold have really more significance attaching to them than many an event which produced considerable excitement in the course of the conflict, and which at first sight would seem of more importance. Dr. Arnold may fairly be described as a Broad Evangelical, and if the principles which he laid down could have been successfully maintained in the Establishment, they would have been the most effectual defence against the so-called Catholic party. Where the Evangelicals have always been weak, he was strong; where they faltered, he was decided; where they shrank from the full application of their own principles, he was uncompromising. His fervid utterances even in those early stages of Romanizing development are in marked contrast with the stammering and uncertain language often heard now from Evangelical chiefs at Church Congresses, ever since the reaction towards mediævalism has become so strongly pronounced that the eyes of all wise Protestants ought to have been enlightened as to the seriousness of the danger. How much the cause of Protestantism in the Anglican Church has lost by the lack of such champions,

or by the absence of a school formed after his model, it would not be easy to estimate.

There have, no doubt, been others who have laid down principles of liberty as broadly as he has done, but he combined with these a firm attachment to the essential points of the Evangelical system, which has not always been found in other members of the school. F. D. Maurice was as truly earnest and spiritual, but his line of inquiry lay in another direction; and though his teaching was just as strongly opposed to Tractarian teachings, he never threw himself into the controversy with the same passionate ardour. The same may be said of the Hares, Charles Kingsley, and others whose varied services it is not possible to describe in so brief a review. The result has been that the discussion has been too much left in the hands of men who have been too deeply compromised, either by their connection with the State Church or by their reverence for party traditions and precedents, to speak with the boldness which the emergency demanded.

Almost the only exception was that of his friend Whately, who had full sympathy with Arnold in his dread of sacerdotal aggression. It is simply impossible to hold the position of these two great champions of spiritual liberty, so long as (using Newman's words in a Protestant instead of a Tractarian sense) Evangelicals have to go on "teaching with the stammering lips of ambiguous formularies, inconsistent precedents, and principles but partially developed." Newman made the experiment of teaching them as a "Catholic." Conscience and logic forced him into the Church of Rome. The Evangelicals have never seemed fully to understand their special difficulty, and have been engaged in a per-

petual effort, as difficult as the tasks of Sisyphus and Tantalus, to reconcile the irreconcilable. Arnold was strong because he held fast by the principles without troubling himself with the speculation which seems to disturb so many as to their probable influence upon the Establishment, and with still less concern as to the possibility of reconciling his views with the formularies of his Church.

His position is clearly defined in a letter he wrote to an old pupil in whom he had detected sympathy with the New Oxford ideas. The young man had indicated "a possibility that he might be tempted to look elsewhere than to the New Testament for a full picture of Christianity," and on this his former tutor and friend addresses him. He rests nothing on any appeal to the traditions and precedents even of the first centuries, but rightly takes up the point as marking the radical antagonism between the religion of the New Testament and that of the Oxford School. "The Newmanites would not, I think, yet dare to admit that their religion was different from that of the New Testament; but I am perfectly satisfied that it is so, and that what they call Ecclesiastical Tradition contains things wholly inconsistent with the doctrines of our Lord, of St. Paul, of St. Peter, and of St. John. And it is because I see these on the one side, and on the other not the writings merely of fallible men, but of men who, even in human matters, are most unfit to be an authority, from their being merely the echo of the opinions of their time, instead of soaring far above them into the regions of eternal truth (the unvarying mark of all those great men who are and have been—not infallible indeed—but truly *an authority*, claiming *à priori* our deference, and

making it incumbent on us to examine well before we pronounce in the peculiar line of their own greatness against them); because the question is truly between Paul and Cyprian; and because all that is in any way good in Cyprian, which is much, is that which he gained from Paul and from Christianity—that I should not feel myself called upon, except from local or temporary circumstances, to enter into the inquiry. And if I did enter into it I should do it in Martyn's spirit, to satisfy myself, by a renewed inquiry, that I had unshaken grounds for rejecting the apostasy, and for cleaving to Christ and His apostles; not as if by possibility I could change my Master, and having known Christ and the perfections of His gospel, could ever, whilst life and reason remained, go from Him to bow down before an unsightly idol." [1]

VII.

It is strange that Evangelicals should to so large an extent have been indifferent to an aspect of the controversy which involves the very essence of the teaching of the Apostle Paul and of our Lord Himself. About questions of symbol or rite they have been vehement in protest and even decided in action. When some piece of special audacity has excited public indignation they have not been slow to take advantage of the popular fury, but even then they have sought to turn it upon the obnoxious individual or the offensive practice rather than on the evil principle underlying the whole. Arnold described them as a party "with infinitely little minds, disputing about anise and cummin when heaven and earth are coming together around

[1] *Arnold's Life*, Letter clxxxi.

them, with much of Christian harmlessness, but with nothing of Christian wisdom." Lynch law, as he calls it, has been their favourite instrument always. If a majority could be secured in the University Convocation, or a condemnation obtained in a court of law, they were satisfied; but not only have they nervously shrunk from such reforms as might cleanse the fountain from which such evil streams are continually bursting forth, but have been extremely timid and halting in the assertion of the principles which they undertook to champion. It was with the principles that Arnold was concerned. His keen dissection of the Oxford teachings and his trenchant denunciation of the system, alike in its fundamental doctrines and in the conclusions to which they led, were of high value then, but they are, if possible, even more useful now.

Time has vindicated the accuracy of his diagnosis, but it has also proved the impossibility of applying the necessary remedies without ensuring the destruction of the Establishment. It has done even more than this. It has demonstrated the insidious and corrupting influence of errors that have certainly lost nothing of their mischievous character. If, as Arnold insisted, they were antichristian then, they are antichristian now. Their teachers indeed are bolder and more extreme than ever, and no effort is spared to secure for them popular sympathy and approval; but how seldom do we hear such emphatic and manly protests as those which abound in the writings and letters of Dr. Arnold. In his view the peril was one which threatened Christianity itself, and all considerations bearing upon the interests of the Establishment or the Church were forgotten in an intense anxiety, like that of Paul, lest

any should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

There was in him none of the miserable bigotry which prevents so many from doing justice to the high qualities of the Tractarian leaders and their writings; but, on the other hand, there was none of that morbid charity which would have restrained the condemnation of false teaching because of the lofty character of the teacher and the beauty of the form in which he presented his error. "I have been reading," he says, in a letter to Dr. Hawkins,[1] "the Pusey and Newman Tracts with no small astonishment; they surpass all my expectations in point of extravagance, and in their complete opposition to the Christianity of the New Testament. But there are some beautiful things in Pusey's Tracts on Baptism, much that is holy and pure and truly Christian, till, like Don Quixote's good sense in ordinary matters, it all gets upset by some outbreak of his particular superstition." This discrimination is eminently characteristic of the man, who was as incapable of doing intentional injustice to the men as of permitting any tampering with the sacred interests of truth. The Oxford movement was in his view the apostasy of the day, and he was too loyal a servant of the truth to withhold his protest, or to give it in any modified form. To-day we are asked in the name of liberty and comprehensiveness to tolerate variety of ritual, by means of which the priest may be able to impress the worshippers with a sense of the sanctity of his office. Dr. Arnold, on the contrary, held the whole to be a mere idolatry, and did not hesitate thus to express himself. "And these, being only imperfect ideas, the

[1] *Arnold's Life*, p. 381.

unreserved worship of them unavoidably tends to the neglect of other ideas no less important; and thence some passion or other loses its proper and intended check, and the moral evil follows. . . . I have been looking through the Tracts, which are to me a memorable proof of their idolatry; some of the idols are better than others, some being indeed as very a *Truncus ficulnus* as ever the most degraded superstition worshipped; but as to Christianity there is more of it in any one of Mrs. Sherwood's or Mrs. Cameron's, or indeed of any of the Tract Society's, than in all the two Oxford octavos. And these men would exclude John Bunyan, and Mrs. Fry, and John Howard from Christ's Church, while they exalt the Nonjurors into confessors, and Laud into a martyr."[1]

This is the ground of a consistent Protestantism—and it is the only one on which the battle can ever be successfully fought. A Christianity without authoritative tradition, without human priests, without altar or mystic sacrifice, was the ideal for which he contended. Of tradition, he says, "I am well satisfied that if you let in but one little finger of Tradition, you will have in the whole monster—horns and tail and all."[2] With others of the most cherished ideas of the party he had just as little patience. His was the policy of thorough, and had it been possible to rally the Anglican Church to such a standard, the aggressions of a semi-Romanism might have been more readily arrested. But the defenders of the Church were more afraid of their real friends than of their assailants; they shuddered at the thought of the principles in which would have been found their salvation, and sought to conciliate and tem-

[1] *Arnold's Life*, Letter cxxxv. [2] Ibid., p. 374.

porize with those whom they ought to have resisted to the death.

VIII.

Archbishop Whately exercised much less influence on the formation of opinion than his friend and comrade, Dr. Arnold; but he was a more formidable opponent of the Tracts and their writers. If it would be speaking too strongly to describe Arnold as the founder of a school, he may at all events be regarded as one of the principal authors of that tendency which has subsequently been more fully manifested by the Broad Church party. In many of the most distinguished representatives of that spirit the effect of his teachings may be distinctly traced, and they would themselves be the first to admit the fact. With Whately it was very different. The power he wielded was that of logic—keen, trenchant, and conclusive—and the service which he thus rendered to the cause of truth was inestimable. But he did not captivate the hearts of men or train a body of followers to perpetuate the influence of his spirit. It was rather as a mighty champion of scriptural purity and simplicity than as the leader of a distinct party that he played his part in this great struggle.

Perhaps one of the chief reasons for this isolation was the logical character of his mind, and his refusal to accept those qualifications of principles which were suggested by timidity or expediency. He followed a truth to its full issue, and was not deterred from applying it to existing circumstances by any fear of wounding the prejudices or disturbing the comfort and security of those whose cherished ideas or favourite institutions he challenged. An illustration of the uncompromising

temper in which he treated the "burning" questions of the time is supplied in a little book, the authorship of which he never acknowledged, but never disclaimed, although, as his biographer tells us, "public opinion has uniformly atrributed it to him." Of it Newman writes: "In the year 1826, in the course of a walk, Froude said much to me about a work then published, called 'Letters on the Church, by an Episcopalian.' He said that it would make my blood boil. It was certainly a most powerful composition." "Great force and ingenuity" and "thorough-going vehemence" are the characteristics of this able book as described by Newman. They are certainly the qualities found in the writings of Whately everywhere, and the results on opponents must often have been to make the blood boil. The Archbishop had no liking for pleasant compromises, for halting statements which lose more than half their strength by their cautious qualifications, for ingenious attempts to reconcile direct opposites, and make them appear the one and the same. Instead of looking at angles of great questions from some peculiar standpoint of his own, he dealt with their central principles, which he subjected to keen scrutiny and unsparing criticism. There could be no greater contrast than that between his stern and rugged presentation of hard truths and the beautiful pictures of ecclesiastical principles and systems in which the Broad Church leader of our own time delights. He dealt with hard realities, the Broad Churchman of to-day with ideals evolved out of his own consciousness. The force of Whately's serene and penetrating intellect was all the more telling because there was in his writings as little sign of passion as there was of a desire to soften his statements in accommodation to the feelings of

others. His arrows went straight to the mark, and that mark was not a mere accident of the system which he was opposing, but its essential principle.

He left it to others to meet the new Oxford teachers on their own ground, and to prove how utterly they failed to establish their own positions by an appeal to Christian antiquity. For himself he refused to concede any authority even to those early ages of the Church in whose teachings and precedents Dr. Newman and his followers found that law of the "Holy Catholic Church" by which, they contended, the Church of to-day should be bound. The Master Himself was, in the Archbishop's opinion, the King in His own kingdom; and in his liberal and most powerful essays on that kingdom, he maintained that the teachings of Christ were utterly irreconcilable with that scheme of hierarchical rule on behalf of which the sanction of the primitive Church was invoked. Dr. Goode, afterwards Dean of Ripon, and Isaac Taylor abundantly demonstrated the weakness of the position which the Tractarians had taken; but the Archbishop inflicted on their cause more deadly injury by cutting away the foundation on which the whole structure rested. The *Cautions for the Times*, consisting of a series of tracts addressed to the people in an English parish, by the former, contain the most thorough dissection of the Oxford movement in all its parts which the controversy evoked. Various writers were engaged in the work, but the informing mind was that of Whately himself. They were not written till some years after the secession of Dr. Newman, and, in fact, were called forth by the panic which followed the promulgation of the celebrated Bull, by which the Pope divided England into dioceses. They set forth with such masculine vigour the principles for

which true Protestantism must contend as to awaken a regret that one who had both the courage and ability to meet the great evil of the day with such a powerful resistance was sent to the Irish Primacy, instead of being placed where the pressure was most severe, and the need of a stout champion of the truth most imperative.

But of Whately it was even more true than of Arnold, that he was regarded with distrust by those who should most eagerly have welcomed so powerful an ally. The failure of the Evangelicals and these Liberals to comprehend each other has proved nothing short of a calamity not only to the Established Church, but to the cause of Protestantism and true religion. Perhaps both parties were to blame for the unfortunate misunderstanding which not only prevented the co-operation of these two sections of the great Protestant army, but continually arrayed them in hostility to each other, the common enemy being in turns the ally of both. The Broad Church party has consistently advocated comprehension, and its sympathies have thus always inclined to the side of those whose position in the Establishment was attacked. The Evangelicals have, on the contrary, ever been ready to join in the assault on all who differed from their theories. In their view the Anglican Church was meant to be Protestant after their type, and they have, therefore, been just as ready to assist the men whom they denounce as traitors in excluding from the Church those who pushed their Protestant principles a little further than they were prepared to do themselves, as to seize on any opportunity that offered itself for stamping out the treason with which they had entered into such unnatural alliance.

IX.

To the friends of Protestantism and liberty, to whatever Church they belong, the story is a melancholy one. Evangelicals have always suspected Liberals, and in their turn Liberals have been too prone to be scornful of Evangelicals. Thus Whately had to face a storm of opposition from a party which, had it been more clear-sighted, would have discovered in him a force the most necessary and valuable for the conflicts of the time. The Tractarians were imposing on multitudes by their confident assumptions of authority, their appeals to the Fathers, to tradition and the voice of the Church. If they were to be successfully met, it was necessary their claims should be subjected to an examination conducted on the principles of the severest logic, no tolerance extended to high-sounding assertions which were laid down as axioms when they were nothing better than postulates, and no fallacy allowed to veil itself under an ambiguous phraseology. Whately was the very man to conduct such an investigation, and he has done it with great thoroughness and, it must be added, when we consider the position which he occupied and the criticism which he provoked, with a courage approaching to intrepidity. An Archbishop asserting that Christianity not only does not acknowledge, but absolutely condemns, the priest, the altar, and the sacrifice, opposing in strongest and most emphatic terms the extensive claims put forth by his own Church because of its Episcopal constitution, and defining its "Apostolical Succession" as nothing more than its "being a regularly constituted Christian society, framed in accordance with the fundamental principles taught by the Apostles and

their great Master," proved himself to be at once a true and a brave man.

But he was supposed to be heterodox in his views of the Sabbath, and to have a *soupçon* of the Sabellian heresy in his theory of the person of Christ, and he was looked upon with suspicion, or even some stronger feeling, by Evangelicals, who seem unable to comprehend that it is Romanists only who pretend to infallibility, and that where there is the liberty for which Protestants contend there are sure to be diversities of opinion. It is true that much of the opposition to his elevation to the Primacy was due to political causes, and was admitted to have been partly based on misapprehension. But not the less was it continued. His biographer tells us that, "generally speaking, Whately occupied an intermediate position throughout life, between the high dogmatic school in the Church and the school which refines away dogma into mere sentiment. Neither suited his positive turn of mind: the first because most of their doctrines seemed to him to rest on mere assumption; the second, because a religion without distinct doctrines was in his view impossible. The articles of his creed were therefore few, but they were adhered to with great steadiness, and, it may be added, not without some tendency to depreciate those minds which could not rest satisfied with his 'common-sense view,' as some disparagingly called it, of Christianity."[1] This testimony of a devoted daughter may be the more readily accepted because the writer's own sympathies inclined much more decidedly towards Evangelical opinions. It accounts both for his strength and for his weakness. A little infusion of

[1] *Memoirs of Archbishop Whately*, vol. i. p. 105. By E. Jane Whately.

sentiment into his character would have increased his personal influence, and would have broken down some of the antagonism that he had to encounter; but it is open to question whether it would materially have contributed to his power. For that power lies in the pitiless logic with which he demolished pretensions which looked so venerable and imposing that few were possessed of the courage necessary to dispute them. Tractarians were wont to talk "so loudly of the Catholic Church" and its authority that the unwary and unlearned were overawed, and even those who were most disposed to resist the particular dicta never ventured to question the right of the Catholic Church to authority. Whately boldly traversed the entire assumption, repudiated the authority, denied the existence of this Holy Catholic Church. "No shadow of proof," he says, "can be offered that the Church in the above sense—the Universal Church—can possibly give any decision at all; that it has any constituted authorities as the organs by which such decision could be framed or promulgated; or, in short, that there is, or ever was, any one community on earth recognized, or having any claim to be recognized, as the Universal Church, bearing rule over and comprehending all particular Churches."[1]

This was the Liberalism to which Dr. Newman was intensely opposed. It was here in its most pronounced form, and it is not surprising that the separation between the quondam friends became so complete. Still Newman acknowledges that to Whately he owed much. "He emphatically opened my mind and taught me to think and use my reason. . . . What he did for me in religious opinions was first to teach me the existence of the

[1] Whately on *The Kingdom of Christ*, p. 139.

Church as a substantive body or corporation; next, to fix in me those anti-Erastian views of Church polity which were one of the most prominent features of the Tractarian movement."[1] But these early associations could not prevent the development of a radical antagonism.

X.

Though Arnold and Whately were the most conspicuous Broad Churchmen of the day, it was on one of their friends that the full weight of High Church opposition fell.

The Anglican, or Catholic, school was the party to begin actual hostilities. The object of attack was Dr. Hampden, whose appointment in 1836 as Regius Professor of Divinity at the University afforded opportunity for an outburst of popular violence and an unscrupulousness of party tactics which touched Dr. Arnold at his most sensitive points—his love of justice and his faith in liberty. It is not easy, after the lapse of the eventful years which have separated us from the conflict, to understand the fierceness of the excitement which raged on both sides during this memorable struggle; which, however, was surpassed, both in bitterness and in interest, by the still more exciting strife which was waged round the appointment of the same divine to the see of Hereford. His Bampton Lecture was the occasion of the almost malignant opposition which he had to encounter. Reading the book now, when the passion of the hour has died away, we are puzzled, and some of those who raised the commotion must be puzzled also, to understand the intensity of the feel-

[1] *Apologia*, p. 10.

ing on both sides. A disinterested observer of to-day finds as little to call forth the strong admiration of his friends as to excite the passionate opposition of his censors. The real fault of Dr. Hampden, however, was as much in his Liberalism as in his theology. He had assailed the scholastic modes of teaching, and this was construed into an attack on the doctrine of the Trinity. But he had done something much worse when he advocated the admission of Dissenters to the University. The appointment of one who not only questioned the theology of the University, but desired also to break down the barriers of its exclusiveness, could not be allowed to pass unchallenged, and all kinds of methods were employed in order to obtain the condemnation of the teacher and his teachings by the University.

What chiefly roused Arnold was not so much the attack as the form which it took. He objected to the adverse impression which had been created by the selection of particular passages from his lectures, which when grouped together and separated from their context gave a very unfair view of the general tenor of his teachings. But he objected still more to the appeal to a tribunal which could not have a judicial character, instead of to one where the whole question could be fairly and thoroughly raised. He had strong views as to the merits of the case, but still stronger as to the attempt to enlist theological and ecclesiastical prejudices, and so to steal a verdict against the accused. If Dr. Hampden was a heretic, his heresy could be proved; but an excited Convocation, the majority of whose members had never read his book, could not be a fitting tribunal to try him. Indeed it was not too much to say that their decision might have been as certainly predicted before the discussion as the verdict

of a jury of Irish landlords upon the lawlessness of Mr. Parnell and the Land League. Country clergymen, trained in the dread of Liberalism and the hatred of Dissent, were not the men to pronounce upon the teachings of one who was supposed to be an exponent of both, and in addition was accused of a heterodoxy which traversed the doctrines of the Athanasian Creed. "It is merely lynch law," said Arnold, "and they might just as well run down any other man who is unpopular with the dominant party in Oxford, and say that they have no confidence in him, and therefore pass a *privilegium* against him without giving him any trial. It is making the legislative power encroach on the judicial with a vengeance, and therefore I would go up to vote for Pusey, Newman, Vaughan, Thomas, or any other whom I deemed a most unfit man in Oxford, if a Tory minority had appointed them and a Whig majority in Convocation were to attack them on a charge which has never been tried." The time came when the Tractarian leaders found that the weapons forged for the injury of others could be turned against themselves. But for the hour their influence was in the ascendant, and the righteous soul of Arnold was at once roused to manly indignation, and touched with a pathetic sorrow, at the outrages offered to liberty and justice professedly for the sake of religion.

Cardinal Newman in the confessions of the "Apologia" —that remarkable book which for ever cleared away the imputations of bad faith which had so frequently been made against him, but at the same time showed how far a great intellect may be enslaved and misled when once it has yielded itself to the rule of any false principle— best enables us to understand the sentiment which in-

spired the opposition. A pamphlet of Dr. Hampden on Dissent appeared to him and his friends the opening of the floodgates of a Liberalism which, if unchecked, would soon overflow the University and even the Church. "While I respect the tone which the pamphlet displays," he says in a letter to the author, "I dare not trust myself to put on paper my feelings about the principles contained in it, tending as they do, in my opinion, altogether to make shipwreck of Christianity. I also lament that by its appearance the first step has been taken towards interrupting that peace and mutual good understanding which has so long prevailed in this place, and which, if once seriously disturbed, will be succeeded by dissensions the more untractable because justified in the minds of those who resist innovation by a feeling of imperative duty." This was nothing short of a declaration of war: it was not allowed to become a mere *brutum fulmen.* Tractarians saw, or thought they saw, an "assault of Liberalism upon the old orthodoxy of Oxford and England," and they organized themselves for resistance. That they so far succeeded as to engender a strong Church sentiment, which has made it certain that, whatever becomes of the Establishment, the Episcopal Church will exist and flourish independent of its help, cannot be questioned. But in the objects which its leaders regarded as paramount the movement has failed. It has not repressed freedom of thought; it has not even narrowed the range within which theological speculation is tolerated; it has done nothing towards freeing the Church from the heresies which in its view were so hateful, which to-day display an audacity and a strength unknown to Hampden and his friends. It is not to be denied however that the Tractarians have created a spirit

which has given an entirely new aspect to the Anglican Church, and may yet have a very material influence upon its destinies.

XI.

Looking back to the memorable gathering in the Sheldonian theatre for the condemnation of Dr. Hampden, by which the mind of Arnold was so deeply moved, it is impossible not to be strongly impressed by the contrast between the spectacle as it appeared to him, and as it presents itself to us who see it in the light which history sheds upon it. "The whole scene," says his biographer, "was invested in his eyes with a tenfold interest by the general principles which it seemed to involve. In the place of the Oxford Convocation there rose before him an image which he declared that he could not put away from him—of the Nonjurors reviling Burnet; of the Council of Constance condemning Huss; of the Judaizers banded together against Paul." Hampden would hardly suggest to any one now the idea even of Burnet, to say nothing of Huss, least of all of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. He was not a man of distinguished ability, of originality of view, or even of remarkable courage; and the part he subsequently played in the history of the Church makes the excitement about his appointment all the less intelligible. He had another great battle to fight, or rather which others had to fight for him, and in which his adversaries contrived to cover themselves with greater discredit than even in this attack on the Bampton Lecture; and then he subsided into an easy-going bishop, who disappointed the fears of his enemies, and must surely have disappointed also the hopes of his friends. On the other

hand, only a few years passed after his trial before the plaintiffs became themselves the defendants. Oxford was stirred with a passion still more violent, leading to results just as futile, and making it, if possible, even more manifest that, whatever be the power by which heresy is to be checked in the Anglican Church, it certainly does not reside with the Convocation of Oxford.

That these proceedings against Dr. Hampden were in the last degree impolitic and shortsighted there are perhaps few now who would be prepared to deny. As Lord Melbourne, in defending the appointment in the House of Lords, very truly said, the writings assailed were upon points of extremely recondite and difficult ecclesiastical learning. In this alone was sufficient reason for acting with cautious discrimination. But from first to last his opponents showed a spirit and proceeded in a manner which could not fail to alienate the sympathies of all friends of liberty and justice. They not only made the man offender for a word, but they themselves contrived so to represent and interpret the word as to create the offence. In short, the conduct of the assailants was nothing better than one of those acts of high-handed injustice in which the records of ecclesiastical controversy unhappily abound. The action of the Bishop of Oxford in the latest stage of the Hampden controversy, that which arose relative to his appointment to the see of Hereford, is very suggestive. His lordship felt himself bound to take certain action with the view of submitting Dr. Hampden's orthodoxy to the decision of a legal tribunal. Circumstances forced him to withdraw from this position, and in this withdrawal he makes the following extremely *naïve* admission in relation to these

Bampton Lectures :—"I have now carefully studied them throughout, with the aid of those explanations of their meaning which you have furnished to the public since their first publication, and now in your private communications. The result of this examination, I am bound plainly to declare, is my own conviction that they do not justly warrant those suspicions of unsoundness to which they have given rise, and which, so long as I trusted to selected extracts, I myself shared. . . . . But allowing for the blemishes of what was, I believe, a necessarily hasty composition, and taking into account, as I now can, your various explanations and assurances, I find in the 'Lectures' little which will not admit of a favourable construction." [1]

With such an acknowledgment from a right reverend father of the Church, that he had actually taken steps which implied a degree of acquiescence in the condemnation of Dr. Hampden before he had even read the book, what was to be expected from men of far inferior calibre and without his official responsibility. They were content with the extracts which had been so freely circulated, but which, on the admission of the Bishop of Oxford himself, did not give a fair representation of the character of the book, and they gave their votes accordingly.

The comments of Lord Melbourne are not more caustic than just. "Very few of your lordships, indeed, have the means of forming any sound opinion upon such extremely difficult, abstruse, and obscure points as those. With respect to an intimation that was made to me upon the subject from the University of Oxford, it seemed to me to have been made by persons who were

[1] *Wilberforce's Life*, vol. i. pp. 486, 487.

utterly ignorant of the writings of Dr. Hampden. I know very little upon the subject, and yet I believe I know more than those who have opposed the doctor's nomination."[1] The quarterly representative of Tory opinion still holds that the principal blame for the transaction rests upon the Liberal Premier, because of his appointment of Dr. Hampden to the episcopate; but a very different judgment will certainly be pronounced by those who have the whole record of the transaction before them. It is not necessary to justify the wisdom of Lord John Russell's selection because the conduct of the bishops, the clergy, and the Convocation is condemned. The appointment to the see of Hereford may have been extremely undesirable, but the opposition to it, like the opposition to Dr. Hampden as Regius Professor of Theology, by which it had been preceded, was something much worse than a mistake, it was an outrage on the first principles of justice and liberty. Whether the greatest amount of blame attaches to the original authors of the movement—to the Convocation which pronounced a decree whose legality was questionable, and whose unfairness is almost beyond controversy, or to the bishops who afterwards made themselves parties to the attempt to deprive Dr. Hampden of his position—it is not necessary to inquire; but the cause which suffered most severely by the whole was that of Evangelical Protestantism, whose representatives failed in loyalty to their own principles, and threw themselves into an alliance the benefits of which were reaped by the party against the development of whose influence they should have most carefully guarded. It was the first example of an ill-omened alliance of two parties

[1] *Memorials of Bishop Hampden*, p. 95.

between whom there is no vital union of theological principle, and who combined only for the repression of that liberty on which the very existence of Protestantism depends.

How is it that in a nation priding itself on its scorn of priestly power—a scorn so innate and intense that it manifested itself even during the period of Roman dominion in a sturdy resistance of Popish aggression that more than once cowed the successors of Hildebrand —and in an age which has a hatred of superstition, equalled only by its contempt, the protest of men such as Arnold and Whately has been so far ineffectual that the party whom they resisted so manfully holds at bay the authorities of Church and State, and has produced such an impression of its strength that on every side there is an eager desire to find some terms of compromise with which it will be content? The first and most obvious answer is that, admirable as were the principles which these enlightened theologians taught, they are not the principles of their own Church. It does attach a certain value to tradition; it does teach the heresy of a human priesthood; it does ascribe to sacraments a supernatural character. Scripture and reason were with Arnold and Whately; but if we turn to the teachings of the Prayer Book, still more, if we study its history and read it in the light of our knowledge of the compilers, it is impossible to deny that the formularies of the Church favour their adversaries rather than themselves. It may be that they do not pronounce absolutely in favour of either of them; but assuredly they lean to the side of a high ecclesiasticism, with hierarchy, priesthood, and symbolic rite, rather than to that of a free and reasonable Christi-

anity, as laid down by those two eminent divines. The position of such men as clergy—one of them a prelate—in a Church which was constructed on the model of the Caroline divines, was certainly anomalous, as the course which the controversy has taken has abundantly proved.

Then, further, the interests of the Establishment told powerfully even upon men like these. They were desirous, if possible, to preserve the Establishment, and were willing, therefore, to take an optimist view of tendencies and influences which ought to have excited their gravest apprehension. This spirit is strongly manifested in one of the *Cautions for the Times*. The writer represents some as saying: "'Let the Church perish, so as the truth of the gospel is maintained.' And, to be sure, if the question were between maintaining the truth of the gospel on the one side, and sacrificing the present constitution of the Church on the other, every Christian who deserves the name would be ready to make that or even a still greater sacrifice." In reply to such a feeling, he seeks to point out the blessings which the Establishment confers both upon its members and upon the country at large, and the evils which would result from the withdrawal of the Protestant element. "There never was a time when the Church could less afford the loss of men of sound Protestant principles. 'Except these abide in the ship' the vessel cannot be saved. But if they will remain among us, and exert themselves, not only strenuously but discreetly, to stem the present tide—which, after all, like other tides, has its hour of ebbing—there is every reason to think that the prevalent errors may be resisted much better from within the Church than from outside it."[1] This is

[1] *Cautions for the Times*, p. 358.

the policy which has been adopted at every point of the controversy, and we see the result in the position of the different parties to-day. It is impossible to deny that the school against which these "Cautions" were directed is in the ascendant, and has not only strengthened it own position, but leavened the minds of its opponents to an extent that Arnold and Whately would have believed incredible. Whether or not the Tractarians had developed the true theory of the Anglican Church, previously allowed to lie dormant, certain it is that their idea has been so far accepted on every side that it is only here and there that we find, even among the admirers of the great Broad Church leaders, utterances at all worthy of their teachers. Arnold, Whately, Archdeacon Hare, Maurice, Charles Kingsley have left behind them few successors with a true liberality and courage like their own. The distinctly rationalistic character which has marked the tendencies of a considerable section of the Broad Church has weakened the influence which the party might otherwise have possessed; but the Erastianism which it shares with the Evangelicals has done it still more serious injury. The Anglican Church is suffering to-day because its Evangelical party has lacked breadth, and its Broad Churchmen have so often been lacking in Evangelical simplicity and spiritual fervour, and because both have lacked that living faith in God and His truth which would have encouraged them to renounce their clinging dependence on the protection and support of the State.

What the Anglican Church has suffered, what English Christianity has lost, how far the nation has been injured by the failure of these two great parties to discharge their true functions, time only will fully reveal.

Optimists may indulge the hope which is expressed by a well-known writer in *The Edinburgh Review*, that the Oxford reaction, when it has run its course, "will at last be gradually absorbed in the larger, more generous movement from which it sprang, and which in a great degree it has thwarted." But no one who marks closely and judges impartially of the drift of public opinion will very confidently indulge that hope. The divines who are influencing the religious life of the Anglican Church at the present moment are not men of the Liberal school. Arnold, Whately, Milman, Robertson, Kingsley are valued by students and thinkers, but they do not exercise preponderating influence on the opinion of the Church, nor do they create the fervid enthusiasm which is doing so much to multiply its agencies and extend its power. On whatever side we look, sacerdotalism seems, in one form or other, to be stamping its impress on the Establishment. The new churches which are built are for the most part fashioned according to its model, and constructed so as to embody its ideas. Among the clergy, and especially among the younger section of them, it becomes increasingly dominant each year, exercising a certain sway even over those who do not belong to the Tractarian school. It has a large number of adherents among the laity, and in them it is developing an ascetic type of piety that craves for the confessional, that submits to penance, that exalts the positive over the moral precepts of religion. The power which it has fostered will never be conquered, except by a strong and living faith on the opposite side. Unfortunately this is the element in which the Broad Church has always been deficient.

LECTURE VI.

THE TRACTARIAN STRUGGLE.

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THE real leader of the agitation against Hampden, as he was the soul of the whole movement which so deeply excited not Oxford only but the entire Church, was John Henry Newman. The name by which Arnold designated the movement was "Newmanism," and though it has not passed into common use, and even as a nickname speedily gave place to that derived from the other distinguished leader of the school, it undoubtedly gave a correct idea of the natural history of the party. Newman was its true inspiration, and although, with characteristic modesty, he sought to keep himself in the background, he became the party leader almost *malgré lui*. He projected plans, and did much to carry them out; he wrote tracts, and edited periodicals or great works of ecclesiastical history as occasion demanded; preached from the pulpit and the press, and wielded immense power in both. But he exerted a still more potent influence by means of that singular personal fascination which was one of the principal factors in the promotion of the objects he had so much at heart. "I never," he says, "had the staidness and dignity necessary for a leader. To the last, I never recognized the hold I had over young men."[1] There can be no reason for doubting the perfect sin-

[1] *History of My Opinions*, p. 59.

cerity of this avowal, and as little for questioning that his remarkable personal charm served more than anything to attract the youth of Oxford to the standard of Catholicity. It is difficult to believe that the early Tracts could have exerted any strong influence, except on minds that were predisposed to receive their teachings. No doubt the teachings themselves were, in some points, extremely congenial to the views of those to whom they were addressed, inasmuch as they exalted the authority of the Church to which Oxford belonged, and invested the order which a large section of its students aspired to enter with all the veneration due to successors of the Apostles and heirs of the mysterious or even miraculous powers of the priesthood. But had the Tracts stood alone, their influence would have died out. But they were supplemented by an entire literature, including prose, poetry, learned treatises, popular appeals, theological arguments, devotional manuals. Hard, often very dull, prose; devout, sometimes very touching, beautiful poetry. Newman was at the head of the whole, and, while he moved others, did a very large share of the work himself. The extraordinary resources of his versatile genius were all made available for the one end. Subtract from the publications of that time his own contributions, how little remains that would have stirred the imaginations and moved the hearts of men. He was critic, theologian, preacher, and a poet—and he was great everywhere. The English Church has produced no greater man, the age has known no subtler intellect, and, with one or two exceptions, none that could ever compare in breadth and power with the distinguished curate of St. Mary's, who has now become a cardinal of the Romish Church.

A writer in *The New Quarterly Magazine* already quoted, says: "There is probably no Englishman who is not proud of this simple, grand old man, and who does not feel that his country is honoured by the cardinal's purple which is at last offered to Dr. Newman." In the former sentiment there will be general if not unanimous agreement, but as to the latter there will be much wider diversity. Earnest Protestants would probably rather be disposed to say that even the cardinal's purple—symbol to them of mediæval superstition, of priestly arrogance, of relentless opposition to human right—cannot hide from them the great intellectual and moral grandeur of the man who, alas, has condescended to wear it. An evil day would it be for England if her reverence for a man, of whom any country and any age might be proud, should lead her people to forget that the system to which, unfortunately, he has given the sanction of his illustrious name, has lost none of the qualities which provoked the revolt of their forefathers against its pretensions, but that its "newest fashions" have narrowed the exclusiveness and intensified the absurdity of its dogmas. That such a man should have yielded himself to the dominion of such a system is cause for unspeakable sadness, but the sorrow it awakens is a tribute to his power and nobility. A wide continent of opinion separates Cardinal Newman from Protestant Dissenters. Yet even among his most enthusiastic admirers there are few who have done him more justice or done it more heartily than those who dissent most from his Church, and regard him as the most powerful force in favour of obscurantism which the century has produced. Poet, philosopher, orator, he has served the party of reaction in each capacity, and has contributed to it a strength

it is impossible to estimate. Still he is a true and a grand Englishman, and some of the apparent inconsistencies in his career may be explained by the struggle which has been so long going on between his true English instincts and the principles of authority which his intellect had accepted. His reputation, at all events, should be dear to right-minded men, and it will be satisfactory if, in the brief review of the conflict in which he was a distinguished chief, it is possible to vindicate him from the charges of deliberate treason and insincerity once so freely brought against him.

I.

The motives which led him to the publication of the Tract which brought on a decisive conflict are easily intelligible. His soul had bowed down to the idol of authority as set up in the Catholic Church, and in seeking to obey its dictates he found himself brought continually into conflict with the ideas prevalent in the Church of which he was a clergyman. He saw that much which he felt to be precious was condemned by the letter of the formularies to which he had sworn allegiance, and he set himself to inquire whether this was really so. The Evangelical party, with that impolicy which has characterized their entire proceedings, had joined with him in his too wild assault upon Dr. Hampden; and then, as though ashamed of their alliance, turned round and reproached him, hinting that their next appearance at Oxford might be in the character of defenders of the Protestant Church from the attacks of the Tractarians. He felt that for his own sake, and for that of others, he was bound to give a clear exposition of his own views of the actual meaning of those

Articles which he was said to be continually opposing. Because of difficulties on this point many of his followers were passing over to Rome, and for their sake he felt it necessary to deal with the subject. This was the real history of the celebrated Tract XC., the publication of which was the turning-point not only in his own history, but in the history of the movement. It was no hasty or unpremeditated step. The Articles had long been his study, and to some extent his difficulty; and some time before the appearance of the Tract, it had been his determination to comment upon them. Friends and foes alike felt that they were a stumbling-block to his school, and he was naturally desirous, if possible, to get rid of the obstacles that interposed in his path. They were, or were assumed to be, the key to the Protestant position, and, even if he could not demolish the fortress, it was necessary at all events to attack it.

Tract XC. was an able, bold — its admirers would describe it as a most masterly, its enemies as a most unscrupulous—attempt to capture the artillery of Anglican Protestantism, and turn its guns against its own defenders. The Protestantism which rests its defence of truth on any traditions however venerable, which accepts any human formularies as binding on the conscience, which calls any body of men "master," may find in the acute analysis by which a writer endeavours to evacuate words of their definite meaning, or to deal with them as the figures in a kaleidoscope, only a proof of the utter futility of those creeds and articles in which so blind a confidence is often reposed. But to the Anglican Protestant, as to the Evangelical, this searching criticism destroyed the very foundations of his system. In any time of uncertainty as to his true relation to the Church,

when disquieted by some of those phrases in the Liturgy which all unprejudiced minds outside read as though absolutely decisive against their theories; when perplexed by the solemn words of the Absolution, or the not less distinct declarations of the Catechism as to Baptismal Regeneration, or, worst of all, by the priestly commission he had received from the bishop—he had taken refuge in the Articles, comforting himself with the thought that they, at least, were Protestant. The brilliant epigram which described the clergy as Arminian and the Liberals as Popish, had characterized the Articles as Calvinistic. But here was a critic who contended that this was an entire mistake, and that they lent themselves as easily to the interpretation of the Catholic as of the Protestant school.

The excitement which was at once aroused, not only in Oxford but over the entire country, is very difficult for us—who have become so accustomed to semi-Romish innovations that we should scarcely be startled by anything short of the appearance of the Archbishop of Canterbury in a tiara, or the Dean of Westminster in a cope—to realize or even understand. The educating process has done a great deal since then which the friends of liberty and Evangelical Protestantism cannot contemplate with any degree of satisfaction. "The English nation," said Arnold in 1836, "are like a man in a lethargy. They are never moved from their conservatism till mustard poultices are put to their feet. Had it not been for the fires of Smithfield they would have remained hostile to the Reformation. Had it not been for the butcheries of Jefferies they would have opposed the Revolution." The remark has been signally verified in the history of the Romanizing movement, with this additional fact to be

noted, that the mustard poultices in the shape of startling sensations, that have from time to time been applied, have lost their power by repetition. Everything now seems to be treated with tacit acquiescence. It was not so in 1841. The nation had not yet learned the lesson which has subsequently been taught by the hesitation or cowardice of Protestant leaders. Wherever, therefore, it became known that an Oxford clergyman, a prominent leader of the party, already regarded with jealous suspicion, had published a Tract to prove that the Articles were not the Protestant formularies they had been supposed, a passionate resentment was aroused in Protestant minds.

II.

In Oxford itself the feeling was intense. A picture of the state of things has been drawn by one who was himself in the midst of the excitement.

"Tract XC. had not been out many days before the University of Oxford was in a fever of excitement. It was bought with such avidity that the very presses were taxed almost beyond their powers to meet the exigencies of the demand. Edition followed edition by days rather than by weeks; and it was not very long before Mr. Newman, as I have heard, realized money enough by the sale of this shilling pamphlet to purchase a valuable library. If, during the month which followed its appearance, you had happened to enter any common-room in Oxford between the hours of six and nine in the evening, you would have been safe to hear some ten or twenty voices eloquent on the subject of Tract XC. If you had happened to pass two heads of houses or tutors of colleges strolling down High Street in the afternoon,

or returning from their walk over Magdalen Bridge, a thousand to one but you would have caught the words 'Newman' and 'Tract XC.'" [1]

Before men had time to recover from the shock produced by the publication; while the more calm and prudent were quietly speculating as to whereunto this would grow; while the hot-headed and impatient were eager to demand those repressive measures which to a certain class of minds appear the heaven-designed instruments for putting down all differences of opinion, whether in regard to articles of religion or conditions of land-tenure, the swelling storm was lashed into wilder fury by the appearance of the well-known letter of the four tutors. The names of these four gentlemen deserve to be commemorated. Two of them are little known to fame—Mr. Churton, Vice-Principal and Tutor of Brazenose, and Mr. Griffiths, who filled a similar position at Wadham College. The others were Mr. H. Bristow Wilson, who was afterwards himself indicted as one of the authors of the *Essays and Reviews*, and has been very unfairly taunted for his conduct in this matter, and reproached with having set an example of that heresy-hunting of which he himself became a victim. Whatever may have been the merits of Mr. Wilson's own case, it is not easy to comprehend why he should be condemned for a manly protest against teaching which he held to be false in principle and immoral in tendency. The last name on the list is more remarkable still. It is the first public document to which is attached the name of the present Primate; and there are not many documents with which he has been associated, even in the great public position he occupies, which transcend this in real significance or

[1] Oakely's *Tractarian Movement*, p. 46.

historic value. There is no valid reason why he should look back with regret upon the part he played in this memorable transaction. The tutors say that "the Tract would appear to us to have a tendency to mitigate beyond what charity requires, and to the prejudice of the pure truth of the gospel, the very serious differences which separate the Church of Rome from our own, and to shake the confidence of the less learned members of the Church of England in the scriptural character of her formularies and teaching." What is this more than a repudiation of the "new and startling views" of liberality which it propounded, such as the friends of the Church had a right to expect from some men of responsible position?

The Tract, like its predecessors, had appeared anonymously, and the demand of the tutors was that it should be endorsed by some other name than that of the printer. Newman acceded to this request, though not until the Hebdomadal Board had confirmed the action of the tutors by a distinct censure upon the teachings of the Tracts. It was to the Vice-Chancellor that he avowed his authorship, while later, at the request of his bishop, he discontinued the Tracts entirely. The spirit of the man, a spirit in harmony with the idea of the system he so ably and seduously inculcated, and in such striking contrast with the conduct of the "Catholic" school of to-day, is very marked in this procedure. Newman was the champion of authority, especially of the authority of the Church as vested in the bishops. He gave practical evidence of this by acceding to the wishes of the bishop, opposed though they were to his own tastes and convictions. He had not received the new light which has dawned upon this generation, that the best mode in which the clergy can uphold the authority of the episco-

pate is to obey their own will and follow the devices and desires of their own clerical heart. He tells us—

"I did not care much for the Bench of Bishops, except as they might be the voice of my Church; nor should I have cared much for a Provincial Council; nor for a Diocesan Synod presided over by my own Bishop; all these matters seemed to me to be *jure ecclesiastico*, but what to me was *jure divino* was the voice of my Bishop in his own person. My own Bishop was my Pope; I knew no other; the successor of the Apostles, the Vicar of Christ. This was but a practical exhibition of the Anglican theory of Church government, as I have already drawn it out myself, after various Anglican divines. This continued all through my course; when at length, in 1845, I wrote to Bishop Wiseman, in whose vicariate I found myself, to announce my conversion, I could find nothing better to say to him than that I would obey the Pope as I had obeyed my own Bishop in the Anglican Church."[1]

Acting on this maxim, he gave up the publication of the Tracts, while still maintaining the soundness of the views propounded in Tract XC.

It is not possible fully to understand his position without taking into consideration the revelations as to the workings of his own mind which are to be found in *Loss and Gain*. If its hero is in any way to be regarded as representative of the author, and of the inner workings of his mind which issued in his adherence to Rome, it is easy to understand that the Tract was intended quite as much for his own relief as for that of his followers. Speaking of the Articles, the hero, replying to an observation of his tutors, that "they are quite clear enough and

[1] *History of my Religious Opinions*, p. 51.

speak the language of common sense," says, "They seem to me sometimes inconsistent with themselves, sometimes with the Prayer Book; so that I am suspicious of them. I don't know *what* I am signing when I sign, yet I ought to sign *ex animo*. A blind submission I could make; I cannot make a blind declaration." "Give me some instances," said Carlton. "For example," said Charles, "they distinctly receive the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith only, which the Prayer Book virtually opposes in every one of its Offices. They refer to the Homilies as authority, yet the Homilies speak of the book of the Apocrypha as inspired, which the Articles implicitly deny. The Articles about Ordination are in their spirit contrary to the Ordination Service. One Article on the Sacraments speaks the doctrine of Melancthon, another that of Calvin. One Article speak of the Church's authority in controversies of faith, yet another makes Scripture the ultimate appeal." The result which he reached was that the Articles could only be received by an act of faith in the Church, and "If I *am* to make a Church infallible," he said, "if I *must* give up private judgment, if I *must* act on faith, there *is* a Church which has a greater claim on us all than the Church of England."[1] This glimpse into his own spiritual history may serve to qualify the repulsion which is produced by the reasonings of Tract XC.; at all events, it shows that the tortuous character of the argument is due to the ambiguity of the document, not to a dishonest purpose on the part of the writer.

[1] *Loss and Gain*, p. 199.

III.

The Dean of Westminster has lately told us that Dr. Newman's secession was not due "to any compunction at having strained the historical sense of the Thirty-nine Articles beyond endurance;" but this does not at all show that he continued to be satisfied with the correctness of his interpretation. His own words not only prove the contrary, but show that the fate which befel his Tract had much to do with his subsequent action. He called it an *experimentum crucis*, and it proved a signal failure.

"I observe also that, though my Tract was an experiment, it was, as I said at the time, 'no *feeler;*' the event showed this; for, when my principle was not granted, I did not draw back, but gave up. I would not hold office in a Church which would not allow my sense of the Articles. My tone was, 'This is necessary for us, and have it we must and will; and if it tends to bring men to look less bitterly on the Church of Rome, so much the better.'" [1]

Put briefly, the object of the Tract was to prove that formularies so ambiguous, and bearing on their face such evident marks of compromise, needed an authoritative interpreter, and that interpreter could be found only in the Catholic Church. The Anglican Church has distinctly avowed its catholicity; and to vindicate its claim to be the English branch of the Catholic Church, it was essential that its ideas should not contradict the recognized teachings of that Church. Dealing with the Articles on these principles, Dr. Newman found no difficulty in constructing out of them a system of theology

[1] *History of my Religious Opinions*, p. 130.

in direct opposition to all that had been supposed most characteristic of Protestantism, and of the intentions of the documents themselves. Protestantism had taught, and the Articles asserted, that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation." By an ingenious manipulation of the terms of the Article, and by an appeal to certain Anglican authorities, it was proved that Scripture is not, on Anglican principles, the rule of faith. A similar process of interpretation led up to the conclusion that justification by faith only was intended to be justification by faith and works, whether of morality or of ritual. Article XXXI. appears to be sufficiently decisive when it pronounces the sacrifice of masses to be "blasphemous fables and pernicious impostures;" but Tract XC. undertakes to prove that this cannot apply to the sacrifice of the Mass, and that "the Article neither speaks against the Mass in itself, nor against its being an offering for the quick and the dead for the remission of sin." It is interesting to note that in the latest edition of the Tract, in 1877, Cardinal Newman expressly retracts the argument to which, at the time, he attached such importance. "I do not see, then, how it can be denied that this Article calls the sacrifice of the Mass itself, in all its private and solitary celebrations (to speak of no other), that is, in all its daily celebrations from year's end to year's end, *toto orbe terrarum*, a 'blasphemous fable.'" The confession may be tardy, but it is satisfactory as an acknowledgment that the Article is directly anti-Romish.

In Article XXII. the whole of the Romish doctrine relative to the purgatory and the ideas and practices connected with it are distinctly condemned; but Dr. Newman endeavours to show that there is a Catholic

doctrine on these points on which it pronounces no censure at all, and by a subtle process of argumentation succeeds in reducing the Article itself to a practical nonentity. The Articles lay down as a principle that there are but two sacraments. Dr. Newman undertakes to prove that this is not at all intended to interfere with the recognition of seven. It is as impossible as it is unnecessary here to attempt any further analysis of this remarkable manifesto. *Ex uno disce omnes.*

The impression which the consideration of such reasonings produces on the mind is unsatisfactory and painful in the very last degree. They savour only of the hyper-subtlety of Jesuit casuistry, and rouse every instinct of English truthfulness to revolt with indignation. It is of secondary importance what cause they may appear to serve, since they offend against every principle of sound morality. When we have fully mastered them, we feel as though the foundations of all certainty had been cut from under our feet, and that we must be living in a world where words do not mean what they say. What medium of communication is to be found between different minds it is hard to say, since that on which we have hitherto relied, and which seems to be the only one absolutely available, has so utterly failed that it has become an instrument for propagating falsehood. The principle of Tract XC. once adopted cannot be confined to the Church or limited to theological formularies. Commercial contracts or political pledges must be interpreted after the same fashion as articles of faith, and be equally unworthy of trust. A well-known saying, attributed to a diplomatist more clever than scrupulous, represents language as a medium for the concealment of thought. Here it becomes one for its absolute misrepresentation,

and the success of the expedient has been so complete that for centuries the English people have trusted for the defence of Protestant principles to a a document which tolerates the worst error of Romanism. To adopt such a mode of interpretation in business life would be to shake to its centre that mutual confidence on which the whole fabric of commercial greatness rests. Why is it that in religious matters alone that such experiments should be made, and the law of honour and uprightness be quietly put aside in the highest of all spheres and in relation to the most sacred of all obligations?

The strong adverse feeling which the Tract created is much more intelligible and praiseworthy than the easy tone which some of the High Church divines adopted in relation to it. Thus Dr. Hook, the vicar of Leeds, wrote to Mr. Newman, "Depend upon it, all the difficulties will vanish on one side if you can conscientiously write a eulogy on our mother the Church of England. . . Do not despond, my dear friend, all is working for good. Tract XC. is a little bit of a scrape, but it does us good to get into scrapes sometimes; it makes us more cautious." To appreciate the point of this, we must try and realize the circumstances under which the celebrated Tract had appeared. Up to that point Mr. Newman had been in the habit of writing in such strong language against the Church of Rome that Mr. Hurrell Froude had remonstrated with him in very decided terms. "The other day," he said in a letter, "accidentally put in my way the Tract on the Apostolical Succession in the Church; and it really does seem so very unfair, that I wonder you could, even in the extremity of *οἰκονομια* and *φενακισμος*, have consented

to be a party to it." In that particular Tract the writer had gone so far as to say that at the Council of Trent "it is to be feared that the whole of the Roman Communion bound itself by a perpetual bond and covenant to the cause of Antichrist." And this was only in accord with other statements scattered over his earlier works. "Unscriptural," "impious," "bold," "unwarranted," "blasphemous," "gross," "monstrous," "cruel," "administering deceitful comfort," and "unauthorized," were the epithets he applied in a single tract (No. XXXVIII.), and they certainly were all justified by the distinct allegations which at different times he brought against the Church to which he has now transferred the service of his magnificent intellect and fervid heart. They are witnesses as to the state of prejudice against Rome in which Newman entered on the movement, and which he retained up to a late date. There were numerous influences at work — intellectual and social, national and personal—to hold him in that position. If he could have honestly maintained Catholic principles and continued a loyal servant of the Anglican Church, interest, association, and feeling would all have led him to do it. But the force of principle was too strong, and his secession is the best evidence of the legitimate tendency of the school of which he was the real founder.

IV.

His denunciations of Rome, however, had undoubtedly helped the Tractarian cause. They did not disarm the suspicion of strong Protestants, but they encouraged High Churchmen to attach themselves to a party which was Catholic and yet anti-Romish, and which welcomed

the idea that it was possible to recover some of the doctrines and rites of which Protestantism had deprived the Church without renouncing its national independence. There has always been in the Anglican Church a section more nearly allied to the Gallican than to either Lutheran or Calvinist, and to its members nothing could be more acceptable than the prospect of being "Catholic" and yet independent of the authority of the Pope. It was this which the earlier Tracts had dangled before them. In vain had it been argued that their ideal was an impossible one and that the movement must be Romeward. A sufficient answer was always ready in the strong anti-Romish declarations of the leader. But it became impossible for him to persist in them. Many of his own followers became uneasy, and to prevent "men who held Romish doctrines from straggling towards Rome" the celebrated Tract was written, to show that a man might subscribe the Articles and yet believe in the characteristic doctrines of Popery. And this is what Dr. Hook called a "little bit of a scrape," out of which it was easy for the writer to extricate himself, if, after having thus advocated Romish ideas, he would close the series with Tract XCI., which should be a eulogy on the Church of England.

That the Liberal Protestants of that day should take a very different view, and should judge not only the writings but the writers somewhat severely, is certainly not surprising. What, in the view of Dr. Hook, was a "little bit of a scrape," appeared to men like Arnold and Whately nothing less than a gross immorality. The extreme statements against Rome were retracted in a letter to *The Conservative Journal* shortly after the appearance of the Tract and years before Dr. Newman's

secession, and a sentence in the retractation goes very far towards justifying the strongest view which could be taken of the whole procedure.

"If you ask me how an individual could venture not simply to hold, but to publish such views of a community so ancient, so wide-spreading, so fruitful in saints, I answer that I said to myself, 'I am not speaking my own words; I am but following almost a *consensus* of the divines of my Church. They have ever used the strongest language against Rome, even the most able and learned of them. I wish to throw myself into their system. While I say what they say I am safe. Such views, too, are necessary for our position.' Yet I have reason to fear still that such language is to be ascribed, in no small measure, to an impetuous temper, a hope of approving myself to persons' respect, and a wish to repel the charge of Romanism." [1]

It is impossible to read this without a feeling of profound sadness; but that sadness results not from any want of confidence in the integrity of the man, such as might have suggested itself to contemporaries who were in the actual fray, but from a deep sense of the overmastering influence of the principle of authority when once it takes possession of a mind. If it thus humiliated a mind of such calibre as Newman's, what is it not likely to effect on those of inferior order! To acquit the Tractarians of intentional dishonesty is one thing, to show that their position was practically dishonest, and that they themselves were ultimately compelled to admit it, is a very different one. The first would simply be the result of a biographical survey, which would have more or less interest, but would be of slight practical

[1] *Via Media*, vol. ii. p. 418.

value. The latter is of significance so long as we have a party in the Anglican Church holding substantially the same views as those which Newman could only vindicate by reasoning like that of Tract XC., of whose unsoundness he himself supplies convincing and irresistible proof.

V.

"Economy," "Reserve," "Phenakism"—the Greek word used by Dr. Newman to describe a very ugly reality is thus explained by Archbishop Whately in a note to a letter in reply. In Donnegan's lexicon, he says, it is rendered "imposture, deception by a false appearance, delusion, deception." These were, on their own showing, the expedients to which these Tract writers had recourse in order to recommend their views to the Church. A full disclosure of them would have made their rejection of them certain. It is not insinuated that they were kept back because the writers were Romanizing conspirators, but solely because they did not believe that the English mind, educated in such different ideas, was prepared to receive them. Hence there was the "esoteric" doctrine for trained and sympathetic disciples, and the "exoteric" addressed to the uninitiated and unsuspecting world. And when the time came that they were forced to a more distinct avowal of their position, and challenged as to its lawfulness, they sheltered themselves behind the plea of a "non-natural sense" in which their subscription was made.

To Mr. Isaac Williams belongs the distinction of having most elaborately worked out this doctrine of "Reserve," and defended it by a plea which in our judgment is little short of blasphemy—that it was thus the

Lord Himself taught. If their contention be true, these priests succeeded not only to the rights and functions of the apostles, but even to the prerogatives of the Lord Himself. He, the Truth, who needed not that any should teach Him what was in man, for Himself knew what was in man, revealed His will to men as they were able to receive it, and therefore these successors of His servants hold that the gospel which He has given to them, that they may go forth and publish it to every creature, is to be doled out in such morsels as in their judgment may seem fitting. The mere human distributor is placed on a level with the Divine Lord of the feast, and the sinners for whose nourishment it is spread are to receive only what these servants please to give. If they think the half-truth is better than the whole truth of God, they are to give only the portion. If they think it expedient that men should be left to believe a lie and hold it to be the truth, they, in the exercise of their right of reserve, may tolerate the error. The suggestion is monstrous, but it is one that the first leaders of that "Catholic" school which has attained such power among us to-day deemed essential to their system.

Mr. W. G. Ward was the author of the phrase "non-natural sense," and he advocated it in a book which produced even more consternation than the Tract of whose ideas it was an enlargement and expansion. The *Ideal of the Church*, was one of the most elaborate original treatises produced by the school, and in acuteness, subtlety, and extent of research it was excelled by none. It has fallen into neglect because there are few except professional students who care to pursue so intricate and extended an investigation, and the number even of them is reduced in consequence of the

discredit thrown on the whole argument by the subsequent action of the reasoner. His sympathy with Rome was more pronounced than that of his leader, his avowal of Romish doctrine more unblushing, his contention that such doctrine ought to be tolerated in the Anglican Church and that it is in no way contrary to the sense of the Articles, even more extreme in its casuistry. Altogether, there was a tone in the book and a force in its *argumentum ad homines*, as addressed to High Churchmen of moderate opinions, which must have been extremely distasteful. "The English Church that is," he said, "modern High Churchmen are ever forward in asserting, had not its origin in the Reformation, but has existed from earlier times. Whereas, then, no one accuses them of disloyalty in preferring the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, what shadow of ground can there be for accusing us of disloyalty any more in preferring the thirteenth century to either?" Trenchant logic of this kind, which falls so heavily on a system of compromise, is not pleasant, because it is so difficult to refute. But Mr. Ward pressed it to a point so extreme, and gave it applications so wide, that there was a strong recoil on the part even of many who were in general sympathy with the "Catholic" view.

The teaching of the book is little better than unadulterated Romanism. Mr. Ward maintained that the Church of England is a branch of the Holy Catholic Church, whose teachings had a Romish as well as an Anglican side, and for himself he openly avowed that while he was desirous to live in fellowship with those who inclined to the latter, his own opinion and feelings were all on the opposite side. He even went so far as to deny that Article XIX. imputed any error to the Romish

Church, and spent no little skill on a very specious argument to justify this extraordinary paradox. It is now only a psychological curiosity, to which the less attention is due since it is the one point on which the new school which has succeeded these Tractarians would not agree with him. "I am of course," he says, "quite aware that the whole of the present argument will be considered as dishonest special pleading by those who will not give themselves the trouble to look candidly at the wording of our Articles, and fairly to examine the allegation of disingenuousness against their framers." Rather is it those whose examinations have been most careful and most candid who will be the first to pronounce such adverse verdict. The pleading was the sophistry of a subtle intellect which had succeeded to a large extent in imposing on itself, and was desirous to secure the acquiescence of more impartial minds in its vindication. Mr. Ward was loath to leave the Anglican Church, and he tried to persuade himself and others that he could remain in it and yet be a Romanist. "Let Mr. Isaac Williams, if he so please, still publish his opinion that human support and human comfort were needful to St. Mary after our Lord's Ascension, while the promise of the Holy Ghost was the sufficient consolation of His disciples; let Dr. Hook continue to call all Roman Catholics Mariolaters; let Mr. Welsh exercise his judgment on a Pope's Bull, and characterize it as worthy of a 'railing' censure, but let others have equal liberty, and with no greater remonstrance, to honour St. Mary as the highest and purest of creatures; to regard the Romish Church with affection and reverence, and to hold a Pope's dogmatic decree as at least exempt from our criticism and comments." The Anglicans of our own

day have steered as far as possible from this Romish rock, and so they are able to teach what in those days was regarded as so extreme. We have now in the Established Church everything Romish but Rome, everything Papal except the Pope and his infallibility. The Ritualists are as vehement in their protests against Papal authority as were Newman and the writers of the Tracts in their earliest time, but they have renounced none of the dogmas for which Mr. Ward contended, and they proclaim them without having to face the opposition he encountered.

VI.

Once more the Sheldonian Theatre was the field of battle. Not even during the Hampden controversy did it present a more stormy aspect, nor was it filled with a more passionate assembly, than that which gathered there on February 13, 1844, to adjudicate primarily on the case of Mr. Ward, but also to pronounce a judgment on Tract XC., and indirectly, on the whole Tractarian movement. From all parts of the country men had been summoned for the defence of Protestant principles, for the condemnation of what appeared nothing short of treason to the principles of the Church, for the degradation of one who had used the dialectic ability which he had learned at Oxford to strike at the heart of all that Oxford had been accustomed most highly to value. It was the usual Oxford tribunal, and one less fitted to try the issue submitted to it could not easily have been found. The country parson element was predominant, and the country parson, often able and cultured, generally kind and genial, for the most

part pious and well-intentioned, is seldom if ever judicial. Least of all was he likely to attain a calm impartiality in a case which touched so nearly all that was dearest to his own heart. Partisan, indeed, was written on most of the countenances of the eager and excited throng who had been attracted to that great theological conflict.

A tendency which it is very hard to resist inclines us all to the side of the defendant in such a case. The odds against him were so overwhelming, and the spirit which apparently moved the majority had in it so many unworthy elements, that it is hard not to give Mr. Ward our sympathy. There is an air of gallantry in this defiance of numbers, of prejudice, of authority, and of passion, which compels a degree of admiration. But there could be no greater mistake than to regard Mr. Ward as one in the illustrious succession of the confessors of truth and freedom. He was contending not for the establishment of a common right, but for a new construction of a title to class privileges. He seemed to plead for liberty, but the liberty he sought was one which would very speedily have devoured its own champions. The worshippers of authority can never be the true friends of liberty. In the initial stages of their movement, when they had to make good their own ground, and when the only way of doing it was to insist on liberty for all, Tractarians were found among its earnest advocates. But their true spirit had already been displayed in the case of Dr. Hampden, and if they who were contending for the admissibility of a "Catholic" interpretation did not insist on its being the only one, they were only restrained by want of power. Exclusiveness is the very essence of their

system, and their talk about liberty is nothing better than a hollow mockery. In an emergency it is well enough to talk about freedom, but no believer in the sovereign rights of the Holy Catholic Church would ever be content to see its authority questioned and its doctrine denied.

The homage rendered by Mr. Ward and his friends to liberty was nothing better than lip service. There may, nevertheless, still be a certain sympathy with him under the belief that a National Church should include even men with opinions as extreme as his; and still more, there may be an indignant resentment of the idea that the loss of his scholastic distinction should be the penalty of his theological error. But such sympathy would be misplaced did it blind us to the fact that the battle which Mr. Ward was fighting was not that of liberty at all, and that the principle for which he contended was one which, if admitted, would be perilous to morality as well as to true freedom, to common honesty as much us to religious principle.

The speech in which he defended himself was distinguished by considerable logical acumen, as well as by that fearless vigour which never fails to impress an audience. Contrary to custom in such cases, it was spoken in English; and while it startled by its daring paradox, must have created considerable excitement by the home thrusts which were directed against each party in turn. High Churchmen and Evangelicals were leagued with members of the Broad Church in a common endeavour to suppress the audacious individual who had assailed the defences of Anglicanism, and sought to prove not only that they were weak, but that they had been purposely left so in order to

allow the admission of those whom, according to common belief, they were intended to exclude. It was not possible to maintain such a position without some acknowledgment of its difficulties. There were formularies which could not, by any exercise of ingenuity, be harmonized with Romanist doctrines, and it had been already admitted by the author that these had been subscribed in a "non-natural sense." The concession was distinctly repeated at the commencement of the speech in defence, but it was followed by a statement which contained the substance of the "apology," and which showed how little was gained by such an admission. "It appears," said Mr. Ward, "that some have supposed me to concede in saying this that I differ from other members of our Church in the peculiarly 'non-natural' sense, which I ascribe to certain of our formularies when I assent to them; whereas a reference to the context will show my distinct argument to be, that all who subscribe our formularies subscribe several of them in a 'non-natural' sense."

This is the argument on which Mr. Ward rested his case, and which he addressed to the several parties in succession. He did not convince them, but some of those who joined in the vote against him must surely have felt some misgivings as to their own position. The effect would have been greater but for the impenetrable panoply of prejudice by which those who had been trained in the Anglican Church, accustomed to regard its traditions as of authority second only to Scripture itself, and taught to look on themselves as the rightful possessors of a great national inheritance, are fortified against such appeals. Their Church is part of their birthright, and they had accepted the conditions im-

posed on its clergy without too careful a scrutiny, just as they would have conformed to any reasonable terms which the law laid down or custom prescribed as necessary to the enjoyment of some landed estate or public office. When they came to examine the conditions closely, some of them might clash with their avowed opinions, and to others it might be very inconvenient for them to give their assent. But so, they argued, it must be with all antiquated documents, and these formularies, like all others, must be understood with the necessary reservations. They subscribed to them, not pledging themselves to every word, but taking them as professions of loyalty to the Reformed Church of England. But here was one who hated the Reformation, who publicly avowed the errors against which the Reformers had revolted, who was at heart a traitor to the Church, the honours of which he desired to enjoy. So they voted against him, deprived him of his degree, condemned his book and his principle of interpretation, and would have included Tract XC. in the same censure but for the interposition of the proctors, who exercised their constitutional right of forbidding a vote on the proposal.

It is useless to condemn the leaders of the Convocation. They acted in obedience to a strong sense of duty, and their protest against both the doctrinal teaching and the new theory of subscription was imperatively necessary. That they were not moved by pleas, which simply meant that they were all in the same condemnation, is not wonderful. Assured of their own integrity, they treated with indifference criticisms which appeared to them over-strained, and whose effect on unprejudiced outsiders they were quite unable to foresee. They felt that they had to resist the introduction of Romanism into a

Church which they regarded as Protestant, and which certainly claimed to be a Church of the Reformation, and they used the force at their command in order to do it. The degradation of Mr. Ward was, unquestionably, an act of persecution, but the persecution was in the system rather than in this particular application of its unjust and exclusive law. But though the immediate purpose was accomplished, no real strength accrued to the Establishment. The "non-natural sense," for which Mr. Ward contended, has since become almost naturalized, and it has been pressed to such an extent that it is hard to say how much is left of the solid foundations on which the Church of England is supposed to rest. The Evangelicals, indeed, have shown themselves anxious to modify their teachings so as to reconcile them with the requirements of the Church; but on the side both of the High Church and the Broad Church there have been successive attempts to test the elasticity of those formularies to the utmost; and the success with which these daring endeavours have been attended cannot fail to have produced a trembling anxiety in the hearts of all who love the truth, as taught in Evangelical Protestantism, more than any political institution, and who believe that that truth would survive the destruction of the Establishment; while, if it were sacrificed, the Establishment is not worth preserving.

VII.

Here the history of this reactionary movement ought, on all ordinarily principles, to have ended, and here, had the Prayer Book answered to the Evangelical representation of it, it must have ended. The challenge of the "Catholic" school had been met and answered in a very

distinct and decisive way, and the answer had come from the body which, beyond all others, would look at the whole question under the influence of High Church prepossessions. The Evangelical element has never been powerful at Oxford, and consequently it had comparatively little to do with the vote of the Convocation on Mr. Ward. "The party," says Mr. Newman, "called Evangelical has never been able to breathe freely in the atmosphere of Oxford, and at no time has been conspicuous as a party for talent and learning." This brief but faithful record furnishes a key to the understanding of very much of the subsequent history of the Anglican Church, and especially the extraordinary change which has taken place in the relative position of parties. The first thing it suggests, however, is that this triumph over Mr. Ward and his school was not accomplished by the Evangelical or High Protestant party.

The Liberals, according to Mr. Newman's view, were the only party who, as a party, acted against him in 1841; but even their policy had undergone a change before 1845, when he tells us they adopted a course "more consistent with their principles." The question of consistency is one that will be determined in different ways, according as those who settle it attach a higher importance to the maintenance of a National Church, or the independence of the individual conscience. But whatever be thought of the consistency of the party which, while standing on the broad basis of perfect liberty, is nevertheless prepared to tolerate the growth of a sacerdotalism which must be ultimately fatal to all liberty, in order that they may retain what is euphemistically called a comprehensive Establishment, it cannot be denied that it rightly interpreted the demands of the

crisis and acted accordingly. Dr. Newman gave a perfectly true explanation of their conduct, and one which certainly acquits him of any charge of ingratitude to them. "Some of those who were prominent against me in 1841, feeling (what they had not felt in 1841) the danger of driving a number of my followers to Rome, and joined by younger friends who had come into university importance since 1841, and felt kindly towards me, adopted a course more consistent with their principles, and proceeded to shield from the zeal of the Hebdomadal Board *not me professedly, but all parties through the country—Tractarians, Evangelicals, Liberals in general—who had to subscribe to the Anglican formularies, on the ground that those formularies, rigidly taken, were, on some point or other, a difficulty to all parties alike.*"

Practically, the Tractarian party, assisted by those Liberals who were content to allow the strained interpretations of Tract XC., and strengthened by the adhesion of a certain section of High Churchmen, who honoured Newman while refusing to follow his lead, was defeated by a force including, of course, such Evangelicals as the University had trained, but composed mainly of those who may be regarded as orthodox Churchmen. Traditional Church-of-Englandism was the power which determined the vote. Dull, stolid, rigidly Tory as it was, it could not grasp the idea that a man might adopt the whole cycle of Romish doctrine and still minister at the altars of the Anglican Church. Common sense was certainly on its side. The Reformation had at least shaped the character of the Established Church, and it was nothing less than monstrous that a clergyman whose own position was due to the changes of the Reformation should deliberately write, "I know

no single movement in the Church, except Arianism in the fourth century, which seems to me so wholly destitute of all claims on our sympathy and regard as the English Reformation." That it should be possible for such a mode of action to find any defenders only shows how different the law of principle and honour which regulates ecclesiastical from that which governs ordinary conduct. It is not possible to suppose a parallel in civil or military life, since there is no power which threatens the sovereignty of the Crown as the Church of Rome menaces the Anglican Church. But had there been a Pretender, with active and daring ambition, whose designs were supported by a powerful army abroad, by the intrigues of diplomacy at foreign courts, and by the secret or vowed sympathy of a strong following among ourselves, what judgment would be pronounced on the colonel of a regiment or the commandant of a garrison who should deliberately publish a condemnation of the Act of Settlement, and contend that the Revolution of 1688 and the subsequent elevation of the House of Brunswick to the throne of Great Britain were among the most traitorous and unrighteous proceedings recorded in history? In the fierce conflicts which followed the Revolution there were men who thus played with their honour and bartered their allegiance. It is unnecessary to say what verdict impartial history has recorded upon the infamy, which no qualities, however illustrious, could redeem, and no deeds in war, however brilliant, could remove or could efface.

For once, then, "traditional Church-of-Englandism" was right, and if the decision of Convocation had ended the controversy, such extraordinary phenomena as the "Ideal of the Christian Church" and Tract

XC. might have been dismissed as historical curiosities. But the significant point here is that, while the writers felt that they could not longer remain in the Church, the principle which they maintained has practically been admitted. It is not too much to say that the action of the courts of law has been shaped in harmony with the theory of Mr. Ward's celebrated defence. The late Dean of Chichester very distinctly marked out the difference between the two modes of regarding the requirements of the Church. "The question," he says, "ought to be, not whether the Church may be so tortured as to give an apparent sanction to a preconceived opinion, but what was it that the Church meant when the Church gave utterance to this or that dogma?" The latter method is that which would be adopted in determining any question of civil contract. It is the open, honourable, and direct mode, but it is one which, if rigidly carried out, must ere this have been fatal to the existence of the National Church.

The Dean does not recognize how much of the difficulty is in the formularies. He gave them his full assent and yet even he might not have passed quite unscathed through a cross-examination by Mr. Ward. For the formularies are not only ambiguous, but so contradictory that it puzzles plain men to understand how any one can honestly accept them all. Mr. Ward pleaded that each party should tolerate the other, as neither was free from sin. Oxford would not listen then, but the Church has been compelled to accept the policy.

VIII.

Had any occasion arisen for the interposition of the law in the case of Dr. Newman, it is possible that he

might have had the benefit of that principle of comprehension which has governed the action of the Court in these matters. But the Anglican Church has no place for men of his stamp. The thinker who will follow the guidance of principle and of principle only, who insists on tearing aside the masks by which conventionalism has hidden the deformity of institutions and practices, and insists on looking at them in their true character ; who is not restrained by the possible consequences of shattering the idols in which men have trusted so long that they have come to believe that they have in them some divine force ; who refuses to be imposed upon by shams, or to accept cunningly devised and specious plausibilities in the place of veritable facts—must, sooner or later come to a breach with an order of things which is based on the shifting sands of a compromise, so hollow that it has always been afraid to define its own terms.

Mr. Froude, the historian, tells us that the formularies have been so constructed as to be capable of either a "Catholic" or "Protestant" interpretation. The result is, we have two opposite parties, each insisting that its reading is the true one, and a third maintaining that there is no fixed and exclusive meaning. The adherents of each of these schools regard its theory as orthodox. They are saturated with its ideas ; what is even worse, are probably filled with its prejudices. They esteem themselves the true representatives of the Anglican Church, and those who are in the opposite ranks as traitors. They look at formularies from the standpoint of their own school, with all the prepossessions derived from their training. Naturally enough they believe that all which is in conformity with their views is according

to the true conception of the Church, while everything of a contrary hue has crept in by misadventure, or is to be understood in the general sense of the formularies. It is only when resolute men, determined to face the reality, put aside the counsels of expediency and commit themselves to the guidance of conscience alone that the compromise completely breaks down. So a Baptist Noel takes up the cross of Dissent, and a Newman seeks peace in the Church of Rome.

It does not lie within the compass of these lectures to trace the successive steps which led to the secession of Mr. Newman and his friends. Various circumstances contributed to this result, but the principal determining cause, undoubtedly, was the conviction to which the celebrated scenes in Convocation contributed, that in the Anglican Church was no resting-place for a man whose heart had yielded to the attractions of antiquity, to the overpowering force of "Catholic" authority, and therefore (irresistibly, as we should say) to the supremacy of Rome. Rome was the goal to which the path that he had been following for years inevitably conducted, and he had the conscientiousness and the courage to pursue it to the end. The party of which *The Times*, that hitherto had supported the movement, has always been representative could not understand such homage to principle, such self-sacrificing loyalty to conscience. "Feeling convinced, as we do, that the Church of England possesses 'all things needful for salvation,' that 'her yoke is easy and her burden light,' the aberration (for it can be called by no other term) of the Tractarian mind is something strange and inexplicable. When we consider that a number of men who were at first united for the sake of defending the Church of England have, after

years of study, arrived at a state of morbid feeling which only aims at her destruction, we are almost tempted to cry out with Festus, 'Much learning hath made them mad.'"[1] Festus found a fitting successor, though it is somewhat surprising that the journalist did not remember against whom the taunt of the Roman cynic was directed, and pause ere he repeated it. It is the cry of the man of the world, of the lover of peace more than of truth, of the worshipper of compromise, of the Erastian everywhere. The servant of conscience is mad. Let us thank God that the world is not yet left without such madness.

There is no evil which a Church has more to dread than that paralysis of conscience, of which the judgment just quoted is symptomatic. To the assaults of enemies, however formidable, it can present a vigorous resistance, and the very excitement of the conflict may itself serve as a reviving and stimulating influence. But when its own quasi-defenders have so far lost faith in conscience that they regard its servants as the unhappy victims of an unintelligible delusion, the Church has more to fear from its friends than its foes.

If the points at issue between the Church of Rome and the Church of England are not of vital importance, the Reformation was worse than a blunder, and some of the most heroic deeds in our history are nothing better than a display of insular pride and lawlessness. But if the differences be real and fundamental, where is the ground of reproach against a man who, having renounced the principles of the Church to which he belongs, abandons his position as one of its teachers and representatives, disdaining to use the influence it gives him

[1] *The Times*, Oct. 11, 1845.

for the purpose of undermining its principles and promoting the interests of its rival? Were it *The Times* alone that showed itself thus incapable of appreciating this high-minded action of men who, rather than crucify conscience, preferred to sever many a sacred tie of friendship, to forsake a Church which was associated with all the hallowed memories of their childhood and their youth, and which they had loved with a passionate devotion, and (not the least trying fact of the whole) to accept the humiliation of publicly confessing that their past lives had been a failure and a mistake, its comments might have been dismissed to that limbo of unfulfilled predictions and mistaken judgments which it has done so much to people. Its language has been quoted here simply because it expresses so well the real judgment of an Erastianism which could easily have forgiven the Romish teachings of Newman if he could have continued to give them in the character of an Anglican teacher and from the pulpit of an Anglican Church.

Such policy is as short-sighted as it is unprincipled. The secession of John Henry Newman is the greatest calamity the Anglican Church has sustained in our day, but his continuance within the Establishment would have been still more fatal to its prosperity. If Newman had remained an Anglican, it would only have been with the hope of making Anglicanism more Catholic; and, remembering the influence he was able to command and how utterly careless he was of the interests of the Establishment, it is not too much to say that before this he would have made the Establishment an impossibility. Twenty-five years after his secession Lord Beaconsfield said the Establishment was still reeling under the blow which his withdrawal inflicted upon it. But if during that period

he had been steadily working at Oxford imbuing the minds of successive generations of undergraduates with his principles, maintaining at every point the rights of the Church with his rare ability and still rarer singleness of purpose, and thus forcing on the conflict between Church authority and public opinion, it is extremely doubtful whether the Establishment could have survived till now.

The Established Church has, perhaps, suffered more by the influence he left behind him than by his own withdrawal. The Oxford revival had in it elements of good. But the new life which it infused into certain sections of society hitherto marked by religious indifference is unhealthy in many of its manifestations, and has been dearly purchased by the spread of a fantastic mysticism on the one side and a superstitious formalism on the other. That the school which he founded will be expelled from the Establishment is not probable; and the continuance and extension of its influence means the increasing alienation of the people from a Protestant clergy, claiming the authority and pretending to the functions of a "Catholic" priesthood. What effect such estrangement will have on the fortunes of the State Church it does not require a seer to predict; but what the result will be so far as the religious life of the nation is concerned, it is not so easy to forecast.

One effect that it has produced is sufficiently apparent and sufficiently sad. The tendency of the writings of Dr. Newman was to compel a choice between absolute submission to authority, or the entire surrender of faith. Numbers chose the latter course, especially after the secession to Rome had revealed to them the full consequences of "Catholic" principles. A writer on the "Recent Fortunes of the Church in Oxford" says: "The

serious, although temporary, defeat of Tractarianism could not but have the gravest consequences; and of these consequences the most important, as has already been hinted, were seen not in the defections to Rome, but in the disintegration of convictions within the English Church. In this respect Oxford, as the source and centre of the movement, suffered especially. Men who, after being brought up in Puritanism or in indifferent Churchmanship, had listened with intelligence and sympathy to the Oxford teachers, could not be again what they once had been, and if, on being deserted by some of the greatest of their new guides, they had not strength to hold to the principles which they had learnt, a break up of faith was, in some cases, inevitable." [1] This is the admission of one who regards the movement with approving sympathy. It is true, but it does not give the whole truth. Had Newman remained loyal to the Anglican Church himself, the unsettling effect of his teachings would still have been felt, and his daring and powerful reassertion of the principles of authority would assuredly have been followed by a reaction towards unbelief.

That Tractarianism was a natural development of Anglicanism, that its leaders were devout as well as able men, and that some of its results were valuable, is not to be denied; but it is equally certain that it has helped to swell the ranks of Romanism and unbelief, and, as time passes on, it will become increasingly manifest that there has been little permanent gain to religion from a revival which has undermined the foundations of faith in Christ in order to strengthen the authority of the Church.

[1] *Church Quarterly Review*, vol. xii. p. 213.

LECTURE VII.

THE CHURCH AND THE COURTS.

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HOWEVER unpleasant in many of its aspects may be the legal struggle between the contending parties in the National Church, which has now extended over thirty years, and which has occupied so largely the legal and judicial mind of the country, it was all but inevitable. It arose out of the ambiguous character of the formularies. Dr. Littledale has described the two schools as representing two religions, and even this strong language does not give too strong a conception of the radical difference between the opposing parties. Where the antagonism was so keen, it was not to be supposed that either would accept the supremacy, or even tolerate the existence, of the other until some decision on the points at issue had been given by the authoritative tribunals. The conflict has been attended with the usual incidents of legal controversies. The defeated party has generally complained of its opponents, of the constitution of the Courts, and ultimately of the law itself. In these complaints there is nothing deserving serious attention, nor is it probable that they will produce any practical result. There are, however, other features in the history which are not so satisfactory. As will be seen in the course of this review, suspicions have been thrown out as to the mode in which the law has

been administered ; and it has been suggested, not without reason, that the highest Court of Appeal has been governed in its decisions by political or statesmanlike as much as by purely legal considerations. To this, more than to any other cause, may be traced the fierceness of the discussions which have been waged around these "judgments," and yet it is hard to see how, apart from such a policy, the Establishment could have been conserved.

I.

Dean Hook asserts, and his view is sustained by evidence which is irresistible, that "neither the Puritan nor the Ritualist accepts the principles of the English Reformation." But the saying which Archbishop Whately first introduced into the discussion is emphatically true in relation to both, "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." Hence the one aim of the courts of law has been to devise some *modus vivendi* by which the Establishment might be supported by different parties, as being at one and the same time the strongest bulwark of Protestantism—the one branch of the "Catholic Church" which scorns Protestantism, though it has submitted to the work of the Reformation, and the great Liberal institution which knows neither Protestant nor Catholic, but exists only for the cultivation of a broad and comprehensive Christianity. Political considerations have softened the hard administration of law ; that is, translating polite euphemisms into plain language, the purity of the law has been sullied, and sound principles of interpreting it set aside ; the impartiality of the judicial bench has been brought into question by the substitution of expediency for justice as

a rule of Courts; and, though it may be little suspected, a serious injury done to the principle of authority in the nation for the sake of preserving the Establishment.

Dean Hook, in a remarkable *ad hominem* argument which it would not be very easy to meet, fixes upon the Evangelicals the responsibility of the first move in this direction. They did not formulate the principles of Newman and Ward, but they acted on them long before Tract XC. ever saw the light. "Our formularies have been unequivocal and orthodox, but the Puritan party still existing in the Church have received them in a non-natural sense." This is a very decided turning of the tables, but it is not apparent how the Evangelicals can fairly meet it. Assuredly, if the sense in which they receive the baptismal formulary—which was the first on which their orthodoxy was challenged—be the natural and obvious one, the Nonconformists of 1661 exiled themselves from the Church under an entire misapprehension, which, however, they shared equally with Sheldon and the defenders of the Act of Uniformity. The story of that time is indeed a serious stumbling-block in the way both of the Evangelical and the Broad Church parties. An Act of Uniformity does not suggest the idea of comprehensiveness, and an Act which was framed with the distinct object of excluding seventeenth century Puritans must have been constructed with singular want of skill if it lends itself easily to the views of nineteenth century Evangelicals.

The first attempt to decide the question between the contending parties in the courts of law was that of Gorham *v.* the Bishop of Exeter, in which the Evangelicals were plaintiffs, although the High Church party were the actual aggressors. Mr. Gorham appealed to the

Court against what he conceived to be an abuse of episcopal authority on the part of the bishop, who had refused to induct him into his living because of his alleged heresy in relation to baptismal regeneration. In more recent suits where the Evangelicals have been the plaintiffs their object has been to dispossess their rivals. In the Gorham suit they were forced to vindicate their own right to a position in the National Church. Mr. Gorham was regularly appointed to the incumbency of Bramford Speke, and the bishop did not pretend to raise any other objection to him except on the ground of his doctrinal opinions. Those opinions themselves were far from being extreme. Mr. Gorham's doctrine, as stated in the judgment, was simply this: "That baptism is a sacrament generally necessary to salvation, but that the grace of regeneration does not so necessarily accompany an act of baptism; that regeneration invariably takes place in baptism; that the grace may be granted before, in, or after baptism; that baptism is an effectual sign of grace, by which God works invisibly in us, but only in such as worthily receive it—in them alone it has a wholesome effect—and that, without reference to the qualification of the recipient, it is not in itself an effectual sign of grace; that infants baptized, and dying before actual sin, are certainly saved; but that in no case is regeneration in baptism unconditional." [1]

A milder statement of the Evangelical position could not well have been framed. It is very different from the vehement denunciations of the whole dogma of baptismal regeneration as a doctrine of devils found in the Evangelical journals of the time. It is much more qualified

[1] *Six Judgments of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council*, p. 22.

than those which are continually heard from Nonconformist pulpits, and to which we were once accustomed from Evangelical divines, and that may occasionally be heard from some of them still.

The strongest point put by Mr. Gorham is that in no case is regeneration in baptism unconditional. What decided Protestants desiderate in his confession is a positive repudiation of the theory of sacramental grace altogether. He asserts that there may be regeneration without baptism, and that even with baptism there is no regeneration unless other conditions, which it is to be supposed are spiritual conditions, are fulfilled. Beyond this, however, lies a further point which is included within the domain of a logical Evangelical system, and that is, that baptism has no relation to regeneration at all. A regenerated man may be baptized, and the baptism may be, as in the case of numbers of the early converts unquestionably it was, the "outward and visible sign" of that regeneration, as being the public confession of faith in Christ, and of intention to live in fellowship with His people and obedience to His law. But a regenerated man may so read the law of Christ as to believe that no absolute obligation to submit to baptism rests on him. Surely the consistent Protestant will not contend that the regeneration of the latter is more questionable than that of the former. It is an outward act observed or dispensed with in obedience to the law of Christ as interpreted by each individual according to his own honest reading of Scriptures. "He that doeth it, to the Lord he doeth it, and giveth God thanks; he that doeth it not, to the Lord he doeth it not, and giveth God thanks." It is even possible to conceive that men might, without conscious dishonesty, be guided in their

decision according to the tendencies of their time; feeling more bound to observe the rite if there was a prevalent disposition to shrink from a form of outward profession, and, on the other hand, abstaining where superstition was converting a simple rite into an idolatrous fetish. These varieties of opinion may exist among conscientious Protestants, but the one point for which all might be expected to contend is that, under no conditions, does baptism regenerate; and this is precisely what is lacking in the deliverance of Mr. Gorham. The difference is not a slight one. If the idea of spiritual grace coming through a sacrament be once conceded, an opening has been made through which the flood of Romish errors may easily rush in.

The circumstances and results of the suit are, however, the more striking because of the hesitating tone of Mr. Gorham himself. His moderation did not screen him from the attack of the bishop, and, though he himself was saved, yet "so as by fire," his moderate statement of the Evangelical doctrine did not obtain the approval of the Court. The utmost which the Court determined was that the liberty which Mr. Gorham claimed for himself had already been exercised by various divines, none of whose opinions, however, can be said to warrant the extreme Evangelical view except that of Whitgift, in whose case it is not an opinion of his own which is quoted, but one of Bullinger's, whose *Decades* he recommends for the study of the clergy, and in which the following significant sentence occurs: "The first beginning of our ministry with Christ is not wrought by the sacraments. In baptism that is sealed and confirmed to infants which they had before." [1]

[1] Bullinger's *Decades*, p. 1047, col. 2. London, 1587.

II.

The principle on which the judgment given by the Privy Council was based undoubtedly was, as is contended by the Dean of Westminster, that of liberty and comprehensiveness. A deliberate attempt had been made to expel the Evangelical party from the Anglican Church, and had Mr. Gorham's suit failed it is not easy to see how this could have been averted. If even so moderate a qualification of the extreme teaching of the formularies were not permitted, the Evangelicals, with all their unwillingness to leave the influence of the Establishment in the hands of rivals who were setting forth what they regarded as soul-destroying errors, could scarcely have consented to retain their positions while their distinctive teaching was forbidden. Even if they had been willing, it is extremely doubtful whether they would have been allowed to retain their offices. Dr. Philpotts, with characteristic vehemence, dogmatism, and indiscretion, had raised questions which men of more prudent temper would have allowed to slumber. Had the victory remained with him it is certain that he would not have been able, even if he had desired, to restrain the action of his excited followers, inspired with all the fervour of a religious hate which they would have regarded as a righteous zeal for God and for the truth, intoxicated with the joy of victory, and desirous to press their advantage to the utmost. As it was, considerable discontent was engendered in the minds of those who naturally and logically felt that the witness of the Anglican Church to "Catholic" truth was falsified by this tolerance of opposing error. Some of the more resolute and courageous followed Newman

and those who had previously gone to Rome, while the Evangelicals settled down to a quiet enjoyment of the position which they had secured. They seemed to be the gainers in the strife, but it may be doubted whether there were any who really lost more. The Evangelical clergy were saved, but the Evangelical spirit was placed under restraints from which it has not subsequently been able to emancipate itself.

The Dean of Westminster is perfectly right in the contention which runs through the whole of his essays on Church and State, that it is the Broad Church principle which has been established by the decision in the Gorham case, as well as in the suits which have subsequently been instituted. It may be that this view is the right view for a national Church to adopt. Whether it is that which is justified by the history of the Anglican Church, or by the language of its laws and formularies, is a very different matter. The late Dean of Chichester says truly, "If we admit the right of each party to place its own construction on our formularies, we must come at last to the conclusion that we possess no authoritative statement of doctrine whatever."[1] That any one who has read the history of the Anglican Church can arrive at the conclusion that this is the ideal which was intended by its founders, or that has been embodied in its institutions, seems hardly conceivable. So long as Broad Church theorists confine themselves to the lofty region of speculation, it is easy to understand and perhaps to sympathize with them; but as soon as they come down to the sterner realities of history and of life their task becomes much more difficult, and the assent which they command from impartial critics much more doubtful.

[1] *The Church and the Age*, vol. i. p. 36.

The Dean of Westminster pleads that a judicious moderation and a Catholic policy have characterized the judgments of the Judicial Committee almost throughout the whole of the agitation of the last thirty years, and in this numbers will agree with him who are staggered as soon as he attempts to reconcile these principles with facts. "The wisest Englishman," he says, "should feel that to cast away either of the existing parties out of the Church of England is to act in despite of that Providence which through three hundred years of war and peace has never allowed either of the two parties entirely to succumb to the other. What God has joined together let no man put asunder." It may be matter for reasonable doubt whether the union in the same Church of two classes of men holding opinions absolutely contradictory and mutually destructive is one of those made in heaven and sanctioned by the Divine blessing. But with the records of 1662 before us, we are compelled to dispute the positive assertion that neither of the parties has ever succumbed to the other. The Act of Uniformity was nothing less than the stamping out of the Evangelical party. Individuals who held Evangelical opinions were no doubt to be found in the ranks of the clergy, even in the dreary century which followed. But Evangelical party there was not until it was resuscitated by the great Evangelical revival. The principle of the judgments of the Privy Council, whether sound or not, had certainly no historic precedents which it could plead in its favour.

The Gorham trial and its results should have taught the Evangelical party some distinct lessons—first, that their position in the Church was insecure, and was due not to the direct protection of the law, but to the com-

prehensive policy of the Court; secondly, that they had nothing to hope from the friendship of the High Church party; and thirdly, that, if they were to remain within the Establishment, their only sound policy was to co-operate with the Liberals, whose desire was to widen the terms of conformity. The Privy Council judgment was utterly fatal to the old Evangelical view of the National Church, and gave them clearly to understand that the most moderate presentation of their distinctive principle was barely tolerated. The view of baptism which the Court accepted as the teaching of the formularies was one which gave High Churchmen all that they could have desired as the foundation of their sacramental system, but as Mr. Gorham had not traversed or denied the dogma, but had rather sought to introduce some qualifying conditions, he was considered not to have exceeded the bounds of permissible liberty. The mighty had indeed fallen when the Protestantism which regarded the National Church as its own proper kingdom was driven to accept such terms as these. It was but the first of a series of humiliations by which the party in the Church which seemed to be most powerful, and which certainly had the strongest hold on popular sympathy, has been reduced to a condition of pitiable impotence.

But so unconscious have they been of their own position, or so determined not to acknowledge what was patent to all observers, that they have never lost an opportunity of employing all their strength to expel other offenders from the Church in which they themselves are only tolerated. High Churchmen have been afraid to strike—for with the story of the Gorham suit before us we cannot ascribe to them any reluctance—

and Liberals have maintained principles which make it impossible for them to be parties to any attack. But so little have the Evangelicals appreciated what they owe to the forbearance of the one or the comprehensiveness of the other, that they have been equally ready to invoke the law for the suppression of both. It is not to their credit, especially considering their circumstances, and it has not been to the advantage of the Protestantism their championship of which was once so loud and ostentatious, that they should have been ever foremost in the work of repression. Their attempts to rescue the Church from the influence of a party which is rapidly leading it back to mediæval superstition are intelligible and defensible on grounds which will afterwards be more distinctly set forth. Their union with High Churchmen in order to crush out freedom of inquiry was much more questionable, and as a piece of ecclesiastical strategy was a grievous blunder.

III.

It is not necessary to approve of the teachings of the celebrated *Essays and Reviews* in order to condemn the tactics of the Evangelicals in relation to them. Some of the authors set forth opinions to which decided objection was naturally taken, but the party with whom the Evangelicals leagued themselves in order to secure their legal condemnation were just as strongly opposed to the conclusions of the Evangelicals, and had they had the power, would have been prepared to put down their allies as well as their opponents, regarding all as being alike rebels against authority. The combined forces failed, and the result of the fierce agitation, which gave the book a popularity and influence which it could never

otherwise have attained, was to show how far a clergyman might depart from the common ideas of orthodoxy without bringing himself within the sweep of the law. It was the charter of the Broad Church, as the Gorham judgment had been that of the Evangelicals.

The Dean of Westminster, in accordance with the principles of which he has been through an honoured life the consistent exponent, hailed both these decisions with joy as an extension, or perhaps, to speak more correctly, an authoritative recognition of the liberty granted by the Anglican Church to its clergy. To him should always be given the credit of a simple and unflinching love of liberty. Alike in the case of Mr. Ward, of Mr. Gorham, and of the Essayists, his voice was lifted up on behalf of toleration; and he rejoiced not so much in the concessions to any particular school of thought as in the establishment of principles which were favourable to all schools alike. His ideal of a National Church will be approved or condemned according to the relative importance which we attach to definite religious opinions. To many it seems nothing short of hollow mockery to have in the same Church two separate bodies of teachers, the chief work of each of whom is to condemn the doctrines set forth by the other. It is possible to conceive of a Church in which there shall be a general agreement that in relation to all dogmas which create difference of opinion among its members, and which are not by any esteemed essential to salvation, there shall either be absolute silence or such an exercise of moderation on both sides as shall avert the scandal of one body of the clergy hurling anathemas against the other. But the essential condition even here is that the points of difference belong to the *dubia*, in relation to which there

should be freedom. The first point in the well-known maxim of the Broad Church party is, *in necessariis unitas*, and this clause is at least as important as either of those by which it is succeeded. That one set of teachers should declare that our Lord Jesus Christ is really present on His own altars, while another repudiates the idea as a piece of gross, heathenish superstition; that the one should insist that

> "A few bright drops of holy dew,
> A few calm words of faith and prayer,"

will work a change in the soul of the unconscious babe, while the other denounces the teaching as nothing better than fetichism; that the one should exalt the priest, the Church, and the sacrament, while the other, with Archbishop Whately, preaches a Christianity "without priest, altar, sacrifice, or temple," can never be anything less than a scandal. But even this is not the worst. No language can be more sweeping or more emphatic than that of the Athanasian Creed. It directly connects salvation with religious opinions, it lays down a number of complicated propositions which it designates the "Catholic faith," it proclaims anathema on all by whom this faith is not received pure and entire. That one section of the clergy should share the feeling of the Essayist, who pronounced it an "unhappy creed," while another should recite it with special fervour in order to express their horror at the heresy of their misguided brethren, is a standing opprobrium to the Church in which this bitter antagonism exists. But when it is added that this state of things exists under an Act of Uniformity which, in its radical idea and its whole structure, is opposed to the idea of clerical liberty, it is more than a reproach; it is a

standing dishonour to the Church in which it is permitted.

The action of the Judicial Committee in relation to these theological questions has a very attractive aspect, especially when contrasted with the wild vehemence and passion too characteristic of purely ecclesiastical movements. It has been all the more readily approved by a certain class of Liberals because it has served to protect freedom of inquiry on the part of the more advanced school of theologians as well as to secure tolerance for the reactionary tendencies of the opposite school. Nothing could have been more ill-judged, more contrary to every idea of fair play, more unlike judicial investigation, more calculated to alienate the sympathy of intelligent men, and to confuse the issue by the introduction of personal elements, than the successive attempts to put down Rationalist speculation on the part of both the other sections of the Church. Commenced under the influence of panic, inspired and sustained by excited passion, prosecuted without wisdom or dignity, they told first to the benefit of the school they were intended to suppress, and then in favour of that policy of wide toleration under which Tractarianism has sheltered itself. Extreme charges were made, and the failure to prove them recoiled on the accusers. Wild clamour took the place of reasonable criticism, and awakened only disgust in the minds of all who were not carried away by the blind passion of the moment, and who cared more for righteous judgment than for a sectarian triumph. Verdicts were pronounced by clerical assemblies without much care to discriminate between the actual statements of the accused and inferences deduced from them, which were treated as their expressed

opinions. The common-sense and justice of the outside world declared against decisions which were so clearly governed by prejudice. As a consequence, a feeling against theology was fostered in many minds, and with it a disposition to approve of any judicial action which, even by a little straining of the law, might enforce lessons of mutual toleration upon all parties.

It has been necessary in the course of a previous lecture to refer to the passionate hate with which Dr. Hampden was assailed on two successive occasions. The story is one on which his opponents cannot look back with any degree of satisfaction. Idle vapourings, which ended only in humiliating defeat, brave words which stand out in marked contrast with the pitiable collapse with which they were followed, vehement appeals to grand principles, followed by ignominious acquiescence in what had been held up as shameless wrong-doing, were the principal features in a movement which covered with discredit the assailants of a divine against whom there was no valid ground of attack. Were it not that ecclesiastical spite is notoriously blinded by its own malignity, it would seem incredible that men claiming to be Christian leaders should after the failure of their endeavours to prevent Dr. Hampden from becoming Regius Professor at Oxford have sought to avenge themselves on him by a series of petty indignities, which would fret and annoy even if they did not injure, and should then have repeated their old tactics in order to bar his further promotion. But the leaders of the Oxford University have continually proved that it is possible to have culture without its softening and refining influence, and, alas, to show also that the counteracting element is a so-called zeal for the orthodox faith. Had the excited

clerics had the courage of their convictions the conflict between Church and State, which ever threatens to come to some decided issue but is ever postponed, must have been precipitated at this juncture. But the tide ebbed even more rapidly than it rose. Lord John Russell quietly maintained his position, though the angry waters as they gathered threatened to submerge him. He had rightly measured their strength, and calculated on the power of the law to restrain them. The absolute supremacy of the State was vindicated, the obnoxious prelate was seated on his throne, and speedily the cries of impotent passion died away, and aggrieved orthodoxy reconciled itself, with such grace as it could command, to the rule of the heretic.

The excitement about the *Essays and Reviews* was not more dignified or more successful, and unfortunately the bishops took more active part in it. Their lordships issued a manifesto against the book; Convocation condemned it; a memorial in opposition to it was signed by one-half of the clergy. The Dean of Westminster lays stress upon the number and eminence of the names that were absent, and adds that they "form the real protest of the wise and thoughtful part of the community against a rash and violent excitement." His view is no doubt substantially correct, though it is easy to understand that there may have been many who refused to commit themselves to so open an antagonism who, nevertheless, disapproved of the book; and it is hardly to be doubted that a decided majority of the clergy regarded it as an audacious manifesto of unbelief. What is most likely to impress the ecclesiastical historian of another generation is that this feeling, which was extremely passion-

ate at the time, produced no practical result. The Judicial Committee revised and reversed the verdict of the clergy. What the Church by every organ which the clergy would acknowledge—by the bishops, by the Convocation, by the majority of the clergy—had pronounced heresy, the legal tribunal, in opposition to the views of its episcopal assessors on some of the questions, declared to be a doctrine not condemned in the authoritative documents of the Anglican Church. The clergy exhibited their ordinary meekness. As the High Churchmen submitted to a judgment which allows a teaching opposed to their ideas of sacramental grace, and as the Evangelicals have subsequently been content to retain their position in a Church which tolerates the doctrine of the Real Presence, again and again pronounced by them to be gross idolatry, so the two parties combined were compelled to retain in their fellowship those who had with bitter severity been labelled the *Septem contra Christum.* The security of the Establishment required it, and they did it with marvellous patience and composure. Is it wonderful that statesmen who have had such experience treat outbursts of clerical indignation with absolute indifference?

IV.

This brief survey of the mode in which the clergy have from time to time endeavoured to stamp out all divergence of opinion enables us to understand the feeling with which the decisions of civil tribunals are regarded by all who take a more liberal and statesmanlike view of Church affairs. But before concurring in the approval which the Dean of Westminster pronounces

upon the action of the Judicial Committee in the difficult suits which it has had to decide, it is necessary to go a point further than he seems disposed to do. With him it seems sufficient to set forth the beauty of his ideal of comprehensiveness in order to vindicate the procedure of the tribunal. It might be sufficient were the Judicial Committee in any sense a legislative body. But no such character attaches to it, and no legislative power can it have any right to exercise. It may be that, had it decided differently, it would have narrowed the basis of the Anglican Church, or might even have forced a secession that would have been fatal to the Establishment. But the business of a Court is not to consider or reform any institution, but simply to administer the law. When it goes beyond this point, and usurps other functions, it sets up an unconstitutional authority which in the long run will surely prove unfriendly to liberty. The present tangled condition of parties in the Anglican Church, and the lawlessness which is charged against some of the clergy, are largely due to the loss of confidence in the judicial character of the supreme tribunal.

Political considerations, the sentiment of Christian charity, all true conceptions of a National Church, may be in favour of the theological anarchy which, with very little qualification, has been established in the Anglican Church by the judgments of the Privy Council. But none of these pleas can be entertained by a legal tribunal without a violation of its primary obligations, or without ultimate peril to the party on whose behalf they are advanced. The legislature alone ought to make the law, and its power cannot be invaded by a judicial body without an infraction of the fundamental principles of constitutional government. It may be perfectly true, as the Dean of

Westminster contends, that a National Church, in order to fulfil its true character, should be elastic as well as comprehensive, but if so, the law should regulate it accordingly. If the Act of Uniformity be repealed, some advance will be made in that direction; but so long as it remains on the statute book, the Courts are bound to administer it as strictly as any other law. To commit to any judicial body the power of modifying the Act in accordance with their view of the supposed necessities of the Church, is to substitute the varying opinions, or even caprices, of individuals for the fixed authority of law, to make the decisions in particular cases depend upon the constitution of the tribunal rather than on the merits of the case, and so to render the control of the law more oppressive by introducing an element of uncertainty. All this is done in order to maintain an institution which is a standing injustice to those who believe that secular legislation on matters of religious belief is tyranny to the individual conscience, and who are deprived of the full rights of citizenship because they will not conform to conditions which the law has prescribed, but which the Courts are allowed to accommodate to all who have sufficient elasticity of conscience to accept the indulgence.

The full consequences of the policy pursued by the Judicial Committee, as set forth by its most liberal and able defender, must come under review when endeavouring to estimate the relative position of the Established Church and the Free Churches. In the meantime, it is to be noted that the real advantage remains with the High Church party, and with its advanced wing. The Broad Church has dictated the principle of the judgments, but the Sacerdotalists have been principally

benefited by its application. It is true that of late the Ridsdale judgment, as applied by Lord Penzance, has pressed hardly upon the ritual of the party; but it must be remembered that the doctrine—which apart from the ritual would be a mere piece of empty show, and compared with the full proclamation of whose mystery the more earnest Romanists, and in truth all who are not carried away by the attraction of mere spectacle, regard vestments and incense as of trifling moment —has received a certain amount of legal sanction. The Bennett judgment was the turning-point in the recent history of religious parties, and it is deserving of study not only because of the principles it lays down, but also still more for the light it throws on the character and aims of the contending parties — sects as they would be called, were they not included within a National Church.

The story of the revival of the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Anglican Church is suggestive and painful. In 1843 Dr. Pusey publicly preached it in the University pulpit at Oxford, in a sermon entitled "Holy Communion: a Comfort for the Penitent," where he maintained, without any circumlocution or ambiguity, that the sacrament is "the body and blood of Christ." "Were it," he says, "only a thankful commemoration of His redeeming love, or *only* a showing forth of His death, or a strengthening *only* and refreshing of the soul, it were, indeed, a reasonable service; but it could have no direct healing for the sinner. To him its special joy is that it is His Redeemer's very broken body; it is His blood which was shed for the remission of his sins." What could be more distinctly Romish than this? "In the words of the ancient Church, he

'drinks his ransom,' he saith that 'the very Body and Blood of the Lord the only sacrifice for sin' God 'poureth out for him yet the most precious blood of His Only-Begotten' 'they are fed from the cross of the Lord, because they eat His body and blood:' and as of the Jews of old even those who had been the betrayers and murderers of their Lord it was said 'the blood which in their frenzy they shed believing they drank,' so of the true penitent it may be said, whatever may have been his sins, so he could repent, awful as it is to say,—the blood he indeed despised and profaned, and trampled underfoot may be, when himself humbled in the dust, drink, and therein drink his salvation."[1] The nature of the change effected in the bread and wine is not defined. It might be consubstantiation or transubstantiation: but however accomplished, the simple elements of the Supper had, by a process which is nothing short of a miracle, become the very body and blood of the Lord. The doctrine startled the University, which took a more serious view of this kind of teaching than is adopted by those who tell us that there is a marked line of distinction between the Anglican and the Ritualist movements: and that while the former was a "revival," the latter is nothing short of a revolution. So far was the University from regarding such teaching as a revival of true Catholic doctrine that the preacher was suspended for two years.

It seems difficult to believe now that such a condemnation should have been so recently pronounced. Dr. Pusey never retracted anything of what he said, but resumed his pulpit, resumed his work, when the sentence of suspension was over, only to reiterate the old

[1] *Comfort for the Penitent*, pp. 18, 19.

teaching. Keble carried the same principle, if possible, still further in his treatise on Eucharistic Adoration. What the University condemned only forty years ago has now quietly taken its place as part of the recognized teaching of the Anglican Church. Mr. Bennett has ample ground for the quiet boast in which he indulges. "It is preached in the pulpit, it is announced in books, it is taught to children in their catechizing, and everywhere it is embraced in faith. . . . Practice is observed tallying with doctrine, and doctrine eliciting practice. . . . The priest, or priest and deacon, formerly standing with faces opposite each other, and leaning over the altar in apparently amicable conference, now appear in their sacerdotal position, as though they were in reality occupied in the Great Sacrifice which it is their office to offer."[1]

Undoubtedly this is nothing short of a revolution, but it was a revolution in the initial quite as much as in the advanced stages of the movement. Mr. Bennett, who followed closely in the footsteps of Dr. Pusey, has very distinctly shown in two crucial passages from his eloquent *Plea for Toleration* that Tractarians and Ritualists are not two separate schools, but the one school at two different points of its history and in two different phases of its development.

"That which I taught first in 1842 I have naturally followed up when the opportunity came; and it is now my happiness to add that I have been enabled, with God's blessing, to realize many things in the dignified observance of the blessed sacrament of which I then only dreamed of as possible. I have been enabled to revive the ancient Catholic vestments, and to use, together

[1] *The Church and the World*, pp. 12, 13. 1867.

with them, many beautiful ceremonies which, though of late years fallen into desuetude, always formed a part of the service of the eucharist in olden times."[1] And again: "I am one of those who have lighted candles at the altar in the daytime; who use incense at the holy sacrifice; who use eucharistic vestments; who elevate the blessed sacrament; who myself adore and teach the people to adore the consecrated elements, believing Christ to be in them, believing that under their veil is the sacred body and blood of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."[2]

Such a statement of one who is now one of the veterans of the party is eminently suggestive. Whether the movement be called a "revival" or a revolution, it is clear that the same term describes both its earlier and its later developments, and that its most trusted representatives notice no difference between them. The system is the same throughout. The priest, the altar, the miracle of the transformation, the mystic sacrament, the re-presented sacrifice—these are the weightier matters of the system; the incense, the vestments, the mid-day lights, the procession, and the banners, are the "mint, the anise, and the cummin." Of those who would separate between the two things which Mr. Bennett truly represents as identical, it is hard to say who are the most misleading guides—those who represent Romish ritual as an innocent fancy which ought to be indulged; or those who stigmatize it as revolution, while tolerating the doctrine which alone gives it any pernicious character, or indeed any character at all.

[1] *Plea for Toleration*, p. 4. Second Edition.
[2] Ibid. p. 14.

V.

Mr. Bennett, however, having thus openly set forth his own creed and practice, remains a clergyman of the Anglican Church. He proclaims himself in essential sympathy with Rome on the crucial point of difference between Rome and the Reformers even of his own Church, and the law tolerates his dissent. Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer died rather than accept the doctrine which Mr. Bennett proclaims from his pulpit and symbolizes at his altar; but the Church permits dishonour to be put upon the names of its illustrious confessors, by allowing him and his sympathizers to mock at the testimony which the Reformers sealed with their blood. It is true that there were some points which in the abstract the Privy Council decided against Mr. Bennett; but when his actual language was reviewed, such marvellous tenderness was shown that the general condemnation of particular opinions attributed to him was frittered away until it lost all practical value. His words indeed were pronounced to be "rash, ill-judged, and perilously near to a violation of the law." But practically he was acquitted, and the advantage remained with him and the scarcely masked Romanism of which he is the exponent.

The most extraordinary feature of the history of these proceedings was the course pursued by the Evangelical party. They had protested loudly and righteously against Mr. Bennett's teaching, and they had instituted the prosecution with the view of depriving him of his preferment, yet when the Judicial Committee decided that his teaching had not been such as to bring him within the purview of the law, they expressed their

devout thankfulness for the judgment. But what had actually occurred? The doctrine which the University of Oxford had condemned thirty years before, silencing Dr. Pusey for two years because he had preached it, had been declared by the highest ecclesiastical court not to be so plainly repugnant to the Articles and formularies as to call for judicial condemnation. "For the first time since the reign of Mary," said the Rev. E. V. Bligh, one of the few Evangelicals who determined to look at the facts, "the essential doctrines of the Mass have been, to the extent at least of the language used by Mr. Bennett, legalized." Mr. Bennett's language was really all that the most earnest teacher of the Real Presence could desire to use. In the first edition of his pamphlet he had spoken of a "real, actual, and visible presence," and if he had persisted in that particular phraseology, the Court declared he must have been condemned. But in a second edition he wisely omitted the word "visible," and instead of saying, "who myself adore and teach the people to adore the consecrated elements, believing Christ to be in them, believing that under their veil is the sacred body and blood of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," substituted "who myself adore and teach the people to adore Christ present in the sacrament under the form of bread and wine, believing that under their veil is the sacred body and blood of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The Court found here an opening for indulgence. Even the later form was pronounced to be perilously near error, but, with an abnormal subtlety of perception, they saw a difference between it and the original phraseology which led them to withhold a judicial condemnation. Mr. Bennett himself recognized no difference and was

content with either form. To the true Protestant that which is "perilously near" is as objectionable as that which would have been even in the view of the Court an actual transgression. Both set forth the wonder-working power of the priest; both degrade the entire conception of the service; both make the altar greater than the God, which as Shakespeare says, with characteristic insight, is "sheer idolatry;" both turned the spiritual religion of Christ into a wretched materialism and an enslaving superstition. Such was the result of the celebrated Bennett prosecution. The Romanizers triumphed and the Evangelicals sought to find consolation in the fact that the Court, though it tolerated Mr. Bennett, had not pronounced transubstantiation to be a doctrine of the English Church. One or two clergymen, to their honour be it spoken, left the Church rather than remain in an Establishment which tolerated such practices.

The decision in Mr. Bennett's case terminated the legal conflict in relation to doctrine. Henceforth the Evangelicals have confined themselves entirely to attacks upon the ritual. By a long, wearisome, and disappointing course of litigation it has been sought to determine the proper ritual of the Anglican Church. The ornaments of the Church and the minister, the position the priest is to take in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the ceremonies which are permissible at the service, the material of which the altar is to be made, and the place where it is to be fixed, and a multitude of things besides, have all been made points of legal controversy. Suit after suit has been instituted, and carried from one Court to another, and yet no decisive and satisfactory settlement has been reached. The

Evangelicals, by whom the prosecutions have been instituted, are of course severely condemned by those whose practices they have challenged, by the Erastian party, who regard the whole controversy as trivial, and, indeed, by all to whom the safety of the Establishment is paramount to every other consideration. On grounds of mere policy their action is open to serious exception. That they have shown a sad lack of broad and far-seeing statesmanship in their procedure must be admitted. They have allowed great principles to be hidden behind a multitude of details, some of them of no importance. They have magnified mere trifles, and so mixed them with graver matters that the minds of the less intelligent have been confused, and their adversaries have obtained sympathy which would have been denied them had the object of the contest been made more apparent. Worst of all, in a struggle where so much was dependent on the spirit of the combatants, they have allowed the Courts to believe that they would submit to any rebuff and bear any humiliation rather than forsake the Establishment, whereas their opponents have created the impression that there is a point beyond which it would not be safe to press them. This would have mattered little if the decision was to be governed by mere law, but if "statesmanlike considerations" were to be introduced it was a point of the very last importance. If a Court undertakes to preserve the Establishment as well as to administer justice, the party which is least anxious about the security of its own position, and, therefore, most likely to resent an adverse decision, has a manifest advantage. In this case the Evangelicals have been pitiably weak where "to be weak is to be miserable," and feebly hesitating where hesita-

tion means defeat. The contrast between their high-sounding words and their vacillating action would have been ludicrous but for the sanctity of the cause whose best interests were thus sacrificed. They have denounced the Ritualists as traitors to the Church, and yet they have shown that they could tolerate and even smile upon their treasons rather than lose the blessings of the Establishment. The only possible justification for the prosecutions which have so seriously disturbed the peace of the Church and stirred up party strife throughout the nation is that the points at issue are of vital moment. But the Evangelicals have done much to deprive themselves of this plea by the meekness with which they have accepted decisions which permitted the continuance of what they have again and again denounced as deadly heresies.

But all this does not affect the principle of the prosecutions. They may have been very unwisely conducted; it may even be that it was very inexpedient to institute them at all. But neither of these considerations touches the essential questions as to the right of the State to interfere. The High Churchman maintains that such questions are outside the province of the Government altogether. The Broad Churchman contends that any attempt of the State to deal with them by pronouncing in favour of either party is contrary to the comprehensive principles of the Anglican Establishment. The answer to both may be found in a review of the facts.

VI.

It is essential to a fair consideration of this subject carefully to define the question at issue. There is no

point of liberty involved in the discussion. No one denies that Anglo-Catholics have an absolute right to worship God according to their own consciences. The ultimate question is whether, as an Act of Parliament has laid down distinct regulations in respect to that worship in the buildings belonging to the nation or the National Church, the Anglo-Catholic Church (supposing there is a body entitled to that name) is justified in setting the law at defiance and still maintaining its position of special privilege. That would be the issue raised if the Church had a corporate character and in it had taken any action. But the Church has said nothing and done nothing. It is only individuals who assume that they know the will of the Catholic Church, and must obey it. Bishops may take a different view, but that does not affect them. Men whose principles altogether preclude the exercise of private judgment set up their private interpretation as supreme, and hide this ugly fact by treating their own fancies as the decisions of the Catholic Church. Still there is no proposal for restricting their freedom. They say that they are priests of the Catholic Church, and are prepared to submit to its authority. But, even if they could succeed in proving that they were loyally fulfilling the Catholic law, that does not justify them in setting at nought the law of the land in the Church which that law has established. The priests who have caused all this commotion and trouble make a twofold assumption. Though they are a minority among the clergy, and are even more outnumbered among the laity of the Church, though they are at variance with the precedents of the Anglican Church, whether before or since the Reformation, and though their case rests on a few phrases, almost on a

single phrase in a rubric, the interpretation of which is admittedly doubtful, they claim to represent the "Catholic" Church. Not content with this, they insist that the will of the Catholic Church must rule the National Church of England. They may be equally wrong on both points, but the law interferes only with that in which the authority of the State is concerned. They are at liberty to set up what standard of Catholicity they please, and to persuade as many as will listen to them to accept it. All that the Courts have been asked to determine is, how far their conduct is in conformity with the law to which they owe their status as ministers of the National Church.

Broad Churchmen, while utterly denying their exclusive claim, would still protect them from the attacks of their rivals, on the ground that a comprehensive Church must have room for them amid the various schools of thought which are admitted to its privileges. It is not easy to say which party is most inconsistent, the Erastians, who insist on the value of the restraining influence which the State can exercise in curbing sacerdotal pretensions, and yet oppose every attempt to exercise that restraint, or the "Catholics," who maintain the exclusiveness of their Church and the supremacy of its rules, and yet accept the aid of those who repudiate all their pretensions, and only tolerate them in the Establishment because they esteem them puerile folly. What is more important is to show that the arguments of both are utterly irreconcilable with the history of the National Church. The same facts afford a conclusive answer to the opposing arguments of both.

VII.

One of the great difficulties attendant upon the whole controversy is the confusion of thought, of which illustrations have come before us already, on the part of those who maintain that their Church has special rights because of its Catholicity. It is in their view the Catholic as it certainly is the Established Church, but these are simply two of its characteristics having no vital relation to each other. It is Established because so Parliament has willed. The history is sufficient to demonstrate this, if, indeed, demonstration is required ; though, owing to the extraordinary facility which these "Catholic" theorists have of ignoring all facts which do not make for their views, considerable misapprehension often prevails.

That the nation and the Church were once coextensive, and that the law of ritual of the Church at that time differed materially from that which obtains at present ; that the Reformation, which to all the world except their own little circle was nothing less than an absolute revolution, was effected by the authority of the Legislature ; and that the existence of Nonconformity on both sides—that of the adherents of the old Church, who complain that there should have been any reformation at all, and that of the descendants of the Puritans, who maintain that the Reformation was imperfect—is the result entirely of this Parliamentary action, would seem to be crucial facts, but by them they are dismissed as though irrelevant to the discussion. They fix their attention upon one or two points which indicate that the clergy were consulted in relation to some of these changes, ignoring all that tell in a contrary direction, and please themselves with the idea that Church rule has always

been an *imperium in imperio.* No theory could be more at variance with history, as certainly no principle could be more contrary to the whole spirit of the English people.

One single fact, quoted from an unquestionable authority, is itself sufficient to disprove the idea that the Church reformed itself. Gibson, in his "Codex," makes a remarkable comment on the third clause of Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity (1 Elizabeth, cap. ii.) The clause reads: "And further be it enacted by the Queen's Highness, with the assent of the Lords and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by authority of the same," &c. On which Gibson makes this note: "Not said *Lords Spiritual*, as is usual, because all the bishops dissented," and further quotes from D'Ewe's Records (p. 28)—"Read tertia visa et conclusa; dissentientibus Archiepiscopo Eborac' Marchione Wint. Comite Salop. Vice Comite Mountague, Episcopis London' Elien' Wigorn' Landaven' Coven' Exon' Cestren' Carliol' ac Dominis Morley, Stafford, Dudley, Wharton, Rich, and North." This was the Act under which the Church of England was governed until the time of Charles II. The Primacy was vacant at the time in consequence of the death of Cardinal Pole, who also had left several sees vacant which were not filled up until after the new law was passed. The Episcopal Bench, however, appears, according to a contemporary letter from Jewel to Peter Martyr, to have been a formidable power in the Upper House. He says: "The bishops are a great hindrance to us; for being, as you know, among the nobility and leading men in the Upper House, and having none there of our side to expose their artifices and confute their falsehoods, they reign as sole monarchs in the midst of ignorant and

weak men, and easily overreach our little party either by their numbers or their reputation for learning."[1] It is not to be supposed, therefore, that the absence of their consent arose from any neglect of duty or deficiency of earnestness on their part. They protested themselves, and even after the third reading of the bill the Bishop of Chester entered a strong and decided protest.

In this opposition the bishops were thoroughly sustained by the opinion of their clergy, Convocation expressly declaring against the changes which were contemplated. It is perfectly true that the Prayer Book was drawn up by eminent divines, but these divines acted in opposition to the opinions of their brethren, publicly recorded in the protest of Convocation ; and the Liturgy, which was the result of their labours, became the Book of Common Prayer for the Anglican Church solely in virtue of a Parliamentary enactment. "Here it may not be improper to observe," says Strype, "that though the use of the English Common Prayer was enjoined by the Parliament, yet the book was not drawn up either by the Council Board or any Lay Committee of the two Houses." That is, the divines compiled the book, but Parliament made it the "use" of the Anglican Church, and that in opposition to the almost unanimous wish of the Bishops and of the clergy.

So far is it from being true that the Church reformed itself that, on the contrary, the Reformation under Elizabeth was carried out by the civil power in opposition to the expressed wishes of the clergy, and by means of an Act of Parliament, which omits the common reference to the "Lords Spiritual," for the simple reason

[1] *Zurich Letters*, p. 22.

that there was not a solitary bishop who voted in its favour. There were Church parties in the reign of Elizabeth with very close resemblance to those which are to be found in our own time. In writing to Peter Martyr, Jewel says: "The scenic apparatus of Divine worship is now under agitation, and those very things which you and I have so often laughed at are now seriously and solemnly entertained by certain persons (for *we* are not consulted), as if the Christian religion could not exist without something tawdry. Our minds, indeed, are not sufficiently disengaged to make these fooleries of much importance. Others are seeking after a *golden*, or, as it rather seems to me, a *leaden* mediocrity, and are crying out that the half is better than the whole."[1] So truly is this a picture of our own times that the indifference shown to the Evangelicals to-day is in perfect harmony with the contempt with which Jewel and his friends were treated in their time. "We," he says, "were not consulted." It may, perhaps, be said that in the ultimate decision the victory remained with the middle party. And that really means that it was pronounced by politicians and given in opposition to the earnest religious men of the times on both sides. It was an Erastian verdict in favour of that *via media* which has such irresistible attractions for all men on questions in which their sympathies are not deeply enlisted; and which, therefore, to politicians with a keen eye to worldly interests and but slight regard for spiritual truth would naturally seem the very perfection of wisdom. In short, it was a secular view adopted by secular men, and set up by the civil authority. Were the State to resolve on establishing some system of

[1] *Zurich Letters*, p. 23.

medicine it would doubtless consult with the President of the Royal College of Physicians, and other medical experts; but this would not give the college some independent right of medical legislation. It may be said that there is no parallel between a medical body which has never had any authority, and Convocation with its time-honoured privileges and precedents; but this only revives the old question as to what these precedents really prove. So far as the restoration of the Reformed religion under Elizabeth, which is the foundation of the existing Church system, is concerned, it is clear not only that it was not the work of Convocation, but that it was effected in defiance of its expressed wishes. To the end, Convocation clung to the old *régime*, and recorded its views in favour of the five cardinal points of Romanism; but Parliament gave no heed either to its resolutions or to the speeches of its Episcopal representatives in the Upper House. It passed the Act of Uniformity in the teeth of the bishops and clergy alike, and, it must be added, with just as little care for the religious convictions of the true Protestants of the time.

There was more disposition to consult the bishops at the Restoration, and the Act of Uniformity then passed was, undoubtedly, the work mainly of Sheldon and his brethren. But that does not alter the fact that its authority was derived from the Legislature. Convocation might prepare a liturgy, but the place which it holds in the Church of England, as by law established, was assigned to it by the State, and the State only. It may be in harmony with "Catholic" traditions, and set forth nothing but "Catholic" doctrine, but its position in the National Church, as the Book of Common Prayer

for the people, is no more dependent upon its Catholic character than upon its literary and æsthetic qualities. The minds of the legislators may have been determined by either of these considerations, or by others of a very different type; but whatever the influences which decided the action of Parliament, it was that action which settled the relation between the book and the nation. The Puritans could have afforded to treat the book with utter indifference, or to regard it with as little concern as the clergy of the Established Church to-day might show to the revised Liturgy of the Free Church of England (as one of the smallest of the sects thinks fit to describe itself), had it received no sanction beyond that of Convocation. It became an instrument of persecution only when it was embodied as a schedule in an Act of Parliament. Parliament made it the test by which to prove men's consciences, the line of separation between the privileged Churchman and the excommunicated schismatic, the authorized exposition of the national faith, and at the same time the instrument of an act of national injustice. It is necessary to insist upon these points because such clouds of fallacy have gathered round the subject that the simple facts are overlooked. The point to be determined is, how did this particular form of Christianity come to be regarded as the religion of England? It is easy to say that it is the true representative of the Catholic faith in this country, but that only throws the question one stage further back. The overwhelming majority of the "Catholic" world proclaims that the Anglican Church is heretical and schismatical. It is certain that between it and the "Catholic" Church elsewhere there is a wide diversity, and that on the most essential points.

By whom has this diversity been created? If by the English clergy, who invested them with the right to tamper with the decisions of the "Holy Catholic Church;" to draw a line between the first four Councils which they are prepared to obey, and the later ones whose authority they set aside; to abolish certain rites which had been established, and distinctly renounce doctrines which had been taught for centuries; to separate themselves from the great mass of their brethren throughout Christendom, and assume the right to pronounce Pope, and hierarchy, and Romish Church all in error, as if they were the sole representatives of Catholicity in England? To assert that they did so is to set aside the whole evidence of history. But had they done so, what would have been the value of their decision apart from the sanction given to it by Parliament? The clergy might have constituted an independent sect; they could not have constituted a National Church. That Church was established by the State; it received its colour and character from the State; so long as it remains a National Church it must submit to the control and regulation of the State.

In 1662 Parliament listened to the remonstrances of the Puritans, and set them aside; considered the scheme of Sheldon and the Convocation, and accepted it. It had to deal with the two contending schemes of Church government, and which it would it set up, and which it would it put down. It might have pursued an entirely opposite course to that which it actually took, and in that case Baxter's reformed Liturgy might have been the Book of Common Prayer; and those who believe in the supreme authority of the first Four Councils would have been, like their brethren of the

Episcopal Church of Scotland, asserting their Catholicity as a Dissenting sect, and learning by experience how far the blessings of freedom can sweeten even the humiliation of Dissent. If, on the contrary, they hold the position of ascendancy and privilege, they owe it entirely to the action of the legislature.

It is thus that the two principal arguments for tolerance disappear as soon as they come to be examined. It is contended by High Churchmen that the custom of Catholic antiquity should rule the Church, and that they who conform to it should be allowed the enjoyment of liberty; it is argued by Broad Churchmen that the one idea of the Church is comprehensiveness, and that everything which tends towards restriction is in violation of its great design. History, on the contrary, shows in opposition to both, that the idea throughout has been one of selection. The statesmen of Elizabeth did not wish to push matters to an extreme so as to exclude any whose religious opinions did not force them into positive disloyalty. Froude thus describes the settlement they effected: "The object has been so to frame the constitution of the Church of England that disloyalty alone should exclude a single English subject from its communion who could in any true sense be called a Christian, so to frame its formulas that they might be patient of a Catholic or Protestant interpretation according to the views of this or that section of the people; that the Church should profess and teach a uniform doctrine in essentials as the word was understood by the latitudinarians of the age; while in non-essentials it should contain ambiguous phrases resembling the many watchwords which divided the world, and thus enable Catholic and Lutheran, Calvinist and Zwinglian, to insist that the

Church of England was theirs."[1] The statement would need to be somewhat qualified in speaking of the last revision. The object of the Elizabethan statesmen and divines was to embrace all varieties of Christian opinion and ritual within the Establishment; that of their successors of the Restoration to exclude everything that did not harmonize with their own ideal. Both desired to identify Dissent with disloyalty. At the earlier period there was a more earnest desire that slight differences should not become a cause of division. At the later a fierce determination that not the faintest shadow of variety should be allowed to mar the effect of the uniformity for which so much was sacrificed.

Yet in both cases there was a principle of selection, and it was more severe and narrow in the second than in the first. The Elizabethan statesmen, in this point more liberal than their sovereign, would have connived at some Puritan liberty in the hope of including all Protestants. The Caroline divines were bent on rooting up Puritanism root and branch, and they had as their instruments legislators even more intolerant and persecuting than themselves. If they meant comprehensiveness, it must be confessed that they took extraordinary means of securing it. The Act of Uniformity, and the Five Mile Act and Conventicle Act, were doubtless intended to make the Church comprehend the nation, but it was to be done by a process of extermination which should get rid of all opposing elements.

To those who look at the facts without previous bias these seem to be such elementary truths that it is difficult to understand how they are overlooked. Nothing would seem to be more certain than the sub-

[1] *History of England*, chap. vii. p. 79.

ordination of an Established Church to the law by which it is established. But a certain section of the clergy have persuaded themselves into the belief that Convocation has exercised a legislative authority independent of Parliament, and the revival of that body, than which nothing could have been more unstatesmanlike or impolitic, has helped to encourage the illusion. Those who helped to secure that end, and who imagined that they rendered an immense service to the Church in doing so, may yet prove to have been its worst enemies. Among them none was more active or more influential than the late Bishop of Winchester. It is certainly surprising that a man of his political sagacity was not alive to the peril surrounding any procedure which tended to establish an independent legislature within an Erastian Establishment, but his exalted ideas of Church authority appear in this instance to have prevailed over the instincts of a wiser policy. He at least employed his great social and political influence for the purpose of removing the difficulties that stood in the way of the resurrection of a body which had been suppressed for more than a century. Lord Derby was the Premier who deliberately set aside the traditions which had governed statesmen of both parties, and permitted Convocation once more to renew its career of mischievous activity. It was no doubt supposed that in the changed state of public opinion the discussions in Convocation would at all events be harmless, and that there was sufficient controlling power in the hands of the State to repress any tendencies to the assertion of a perilous independence in action. But this was an extremely superficial view. It was impossible that such a body could meet and discuss great eclesiastical questions without the development of a sense of

power not to be satisfied by debates alone. The desire to translate its opinion into resolutions and its resolutions into statutes was so natural that it ought to have been foreseen by the statesman who so heedlessly permitted the introduction of a new element of confusion into an already confused and distracted Church.

The effect upon the minds of the clergy generally has been very marked and decided. They believe, or affect to believe, that Convocation is really a legislature for the Church, and to this belief may be traced very much of that insubordinate temper which has been so painfully conspicuous amongst them. The belief is as unsustained by historic fact as it is contrary to the first principle of a National Church. The Bishop of Manchester recently reminded his clergy of some of the points of the history which are in flagrant contradiction to their theory of spiritual independence, as, for example, that the statute of the submission of the clergy and constituting the Court of Delegates, which, he said, "more than any other, marks the lines of the constitution with regard to the relations between Church and State, was passed without any reference to Convocation." He then went on to say: "Earl Cairns had said that any reference to the Houses of Convocation in an Act of Parliament was unprecedented and unconstitutional. He is of course a great constitutional lawyer, and though his remark surprised me as it surprised many others, it is the great feeling entertained by constitutional lawyers." But after all it is not even on arguments like these that this case must really turn. This is certainly not the age in which the power of an ecclesiastical legislature can be revived in a free country like England. A National Church must be governed by the National Legislature. The

one great evil in the whole of the suits to which this lecture has referred has been the usurpation of quasi-legislative functions by a mere judicature. Of this all parties have a right to complain, but the remedy is to be found in an appeal to Parliament, which must always be the governing power of a Church by law established.

LECTURE VIII.

THE RITUALIST CONTROVERSY.

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THERE could not well be a stronger proof that the roots of Tractarianism are in the Book of Common Prayer than the revival of the movement after the loss not only of its great leader, but of many of his most distinguished associates. The mere subtraction of such a force would under any circumstances have been a calamity, but occurring as it did, it seemed to be nothing short of destruction, for it confirmed the worst predictions as to the ultimate issue of Dr. Pusey's teaching, and so deepened the national prejudice against the whole party. The Dean of Westminster speaks of the sudden collapse of the Oxford movement, and says the triumph over Mr. Ward and his friends was "absolute and final;" and in a sense this is true. But the collapse was only temporary, and is scarcely noticed except by those who have followed closely the course of the Church history of the times. The world generally and rightly regards Tractarianism and Ritualism only as two separate stages in one great development.

The popular view is the true one. Comparisons are often drawn between the early and the later movements of the party, always to the disadvantage of the latter. But the criticisms are not just. At all events the

principles of the two movements are identical. The Ritualist chiefs were trained in the Tractarian school, and the distinguished veteran who is at their head has been a leader in both. The check given by the secession of Newman was severe, but it was only temporary. His most trusted and eminent associates remained behind, and were untroubled by any doubts as to the lawfulness of their position. He sought rest for his soul in Rome. Dr. Pusey believed that the English Church was truly Catholic, and he and his followers have done their best to make it correspond to this ideal.

I.

The contrast between the story of these two friends is striking, but is perfectly intelligible. It is clear that Dr. Pusey formed a more correct estimate of the elasticity of the Anglican formularies, the patience of the Anglican authorities, and the credulity of a section of the English people. But his position, as distinct from that of his former comrade, is due largely to his idiosyncrasy. He was, as Newman says, haunted by no intellectual perplexities, and the phrase explains a great deal in relation to him as well as to some others. The marks of fierce and constant struggle are to be found everywhere in Newman's story ; they are to be detected in almost every page of his numerous contributions to theological literature. Even when we look deeply into what he has written since he entered into that rest which the Church of Rome professes to give to all who submit to its teachings, we may find cause to believe that the old perplexities still haunt him. "Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom" seems

to break on the ear as a kind of undertone, in every utterance that comes from his lips.

A very striking illustration is found in his well-known story, *Loss and Gain*, where incidental reference is made to the respective characteristics of Dr. Pusey and himself. Dr. Pusey is said to be always decisive, yet it is admitted that Smith (clearly Newman himself), who will not solve difficult cases of conscience by dogmatic deliverances, attracts more followers. "Well," says one of the speakers, "I can't understand it; he ought not; perhaps they won't stay." "The truth is," says Sheffield, "I suspect he is more of the sceptic at bottom." This is a wonderful self-revelation that explains a great deal of the Cardinal's own career, and of the marked distinction between his course and that of his friend Dr. Pusey, and perhaps of the real causes which so long doomed him to obscurity in his new Church.

No such doubt seems to disturb the serenity of Dr. Pusey's mind. Things are to him what he would have them be. The ideas in which he was trained do not seem ever to have been shaken, or even unsettled by any of the conflicts of the times, or by the desertion of so many of his old comrades. He began life with the conception that in the Anglican Church was the centre of truth and Catholicity; he is fixed in the same persuasion to-day. Newman ascribes the strength of the movement mainly to him, and it is not to be questioned that he brought to it the weight of authority. He was emphatically the *vir pietate gravis*, described by the partiality of his friend as ὁ μεγας, by which we are to understand that what Athanasius, or Gregory, or Cyril had been in their day and generation, Pusey was in his. The suggestion is one of those pardonable exag-

gerations of affection to which members of small companies who are trying to organize grand movements are always prone. Still, it is the expression of a genuine sentiment for which there is this foundation — that in all the qualities of personal character, academic standing, ecclesiastical position, and scholarly reputation, Pusey was entitled to the distinction. But an eminent divine or an ascetic saint may not be a great ecclesiastical leader, and it is very questionable whether Pusey would ever have attained the position but for the previous labours of Newman. The one inspired young men in particular with a passionate enthusiasm which it was impossible for the other ever to enkindle. But in the critical condition of the party after the loss of its real head, Pusey supplied the kind of leader exactly suited to the demands of the crisis.

Dr. Newman tells us that the original accession of Dr. Pusey gave "more sobriety, more gravity, more careful pains, more sense of responsibility to the 'Tracts,' and to the whole movement."

When its hopes seemed to be for ever darkened, and its further progress rendered impossible by the admission of its chief that his attempts had been a practical failure, and that the recognition of Catholic authority meant submission to Rome, Pusey supplied the encouragement and strength which were so sorely wanted by the dispirited Tractarians. It does not seem probable that he could or would ever have founded the school, or if he had, that they would have been more than a body of mediæval thinkers who would have left as little impression on the Church or the world as did the Nonjurors. But, on the other hand, without him it seems in every way probable that the secession of Newman

would have been the end of the movement. He gave it new life by showing that there was a leader as honoured as Newman himself, who remained unconvinced by his arguments and unmoved by his example, who still maintained the Catholicity of the Anglican Church.

The difference was largely due to intellectual character and temperament. With all his hatred of Liberalism, Newman had in him many of the elements which enter into the composition of the most aggressive Liberals. Perhaps it is his consciousness of the existence of such tendencies within him that makes him more severe against Liberalism itself. Pusey, on the contrary, is by natural constitution one who, having settled certain points to his own content, has quietly laid them aside, refusing henceforth to allow the argument to be reopened or his decisions called in question. His position, so admirably sketched by Newman, is all the more deserving of attention because it is typical of a large school.

"People are apt to say that he was once nearer to the Catholic Church than he is now. I pray God that he may one day be far nearer to the Catholic Church than he was then; for I believe that, in his reason and judgment, all the time that I knew him, he never was near to it at all. When I became a Catholic I was often asked 'What of Dr. Pusey?' When I said that I did not see symptoms of his doing as I had done, I was sometimes thought uncharitable. If confidence in his position is (as it is) a first essential in the leader of a party, this Dr. Pusey possessed pre-eminently. The most remarkable instance of this was his statement in one of the subsequent defences of the movement, when moreover it had

advanced a considerable way in the direction of Rome, that among its more hopeful peculiarities was its 'stationariness.' He made it in good faith; it was his subjective view of it." [1]

Another reference of Dr. Newman's to Dr. Pusey is, if possible, still more suggestive. "When there was a proposal, about the end of 1838, for a subscription for a Cranmer Memorial, he wished us both to subscribe together to it. I could not, of course, and wished him to subscribe by himself. That he would not do; he could not bear the thought of our appearing to the world in separate positions in a matter of such importance." A subscription list to a Cranmer Memorial, including the names of the two men who had devoted their lives to undoing all that the reforming archbishop, amid many imperfections, with frequent vacillation and uncertainty, with unfortunate and ever unsuccessful attempts to reconcile loyal service to conscience with fidelity to an Erastian establishment, still resolutely sought to do, and for the sake of which he gave his body to be burned, would certainly have been a theological and historical curiosity. Cranmer has suffered so many things at the hands of many historians and quasi-historians, from Lord Macaulay down to the latest Ritualist critic, that we may rejoice that the consistency of Dr. Newman spared his memory the additional dishonour which would have been put upon it by a testimony which, if it meant anything, meant that he had failed to give the world even a faint conception of the aims to which his life was devoted. Pusey's strange proposal must be traced to his inability to perceive the aspect which his action would have worn to unsophisti-

[1] *History of my Religious Opinions*, p. 62.

cated minds, puzzled to understand whether they were mistaken as to the Protestantism of Cranmer or the anti-Protestantism of the Tractarians. To Dr. Pusey Cranmer was simply an archbishop of the Catholic Church, and honoured accordingly, even though the doctrine which he taught was opposed to the first principles of the "Catholic" faith.

II.

The imperturbable satisfaction of the school of which he has long been the leader is unintelligible to all who have not been educated in its traditions. To all outside observers its members appear to be at war not only with the plainest facts of history, but with the very principles which they themselves have laid down, and which form the foundation of their entire system. The Greek and Romish Churches, as representatives of Catholicity, German Lutherans, Scotch Presbyterians, English Nonconformists, and indeed Protestants of all shades, with one voice repudiate the lofty pretensions of this narrow, insular school. They are hopelessly at issue as to the principle on which the Anglican theory is based, but they are agreed that if it could be established it would be utterly fatal to the pretensions in support of which it is quoted.

If a revelation from heaven had given them the principle of Catholicity, and sanctioned their mode of interpreting it, if such a revelation had proclaimed that the voice of the first four Councils was the voice of the Catholic Church, and that every Anglican clergyman was one of its organs, they could not have assumed a more confident tone or proved themselves more absolutely inaccessible

to argument. It is the exaggeration of a weakness which is specially English, and which is continually involving the nation in difficulty. Englishmen find it hard to comprehend that there can be two views as to the wisdom of English ideas, the perfection of English administration, the beneficence as well as justice of English rule, and the general soundness of the conviction that the English constitution is the most admirable product of this best of all possible worlds. The High Churchman carries this idea into Church life. His Church has hit the exact mean between servile deference to authority and the wild license of free thought. Where it doubts, there is room for inquiry; where it pronounces, there should be instant and absolute acquiescence. It recognizes the value of tradition, but only of the traditions which it approves; it respects the decisions of Councils, but only of such as it acknowledges to have had authority; it proclaims the supremacy of Holy Scripture, but only as Scripture is interpreted by the traditions it receives as Catholic, and the Councils it honours as Œcumenical. The theory is a bundle of paradox and inconsistency; laying down principles, but halting in their applications; recording tests, but withdrawing them the moment they are uttered; acknowledging authority only to repudiate it as soon as it enforces unwelcome conclusions. But it is English. The English Parliament set up this as the insular development of Catholicity; and the High Churchman receives it, and insists that all others ought to receive it, in virtue of its Catholic character, not of its Parliamentary authority.

To the student it is continually presenting itself as a strange psychological problem. He wonders some-

times how a party which has carried its Protestantism so far can suppose it possible to ignore the very name of Protestant and to forbid the advance of those who would carry its own principles further than it has ventured. At others he is equally puzzled to comprehend how those who have made an idol of "Catholicity" can rest in the position of a mere sect, outside the pale of Catholic Christendom. But speculation is useless in the presence of facts. Anglo-Catholics have power in virtue not of the logic of their reasonings, but of the force which is behind them, so long as the National Church remains an embodiment of their views. To others they may appear inconsistent, to themselves they are both the only true Catholics and the only true Englishmen. To them belongs the succession, they have the grace of the sacraments, theirs is the priesthood, and theirs is the altar at which orthodox English Christians ought to worship. This has been Dr. Pusey's view throughout. So deeply rooted was his faith in Anglicanism that Dr. Newman found it extremely difficult to make him understand that his own faith had failed, and that he was contemplating secession. It is this which not only kept him in the Church after his old associate had forsaken it, but made him unable to understand how it was possible for Newman ever to contemplate such a move. "As time went on he would not take any hints which I gave him on the subject of my growing inclination to Rome. When I found him so determined, I had not the heart to go on. And then I knew that, from affection to me, he so often took up and threw himself into what I said, that I felt the great responsibility I should incur if I put things before him just as I might view them myself. And not knowing

him so well as I did afterwards, I feared lest I should unsettle him."

These personal reminiscences sufficiently indicate what a certain class of Protestant champions seem determined to ignore, that there is in the Anglican Church a powerful party, with leaders of the highest ability and the most unquestionable piety, who conscientiously hold the "Catholic" view of the constitution of that Church, and believe not only that they have a right to be in it themselves, but that all who will not obey this "Catholic" authority are aliens and intruders. They teach Romish doctrine, but they have not any drawings towards Rome. Acting on the assumption that there is a large mass of teaching which they label "Catholic" that still belongs to the Reformed Church of England, though it has been practically ignored, they set themselves to revive it, and their success has been complete. Dr. Pusey is the most influential representative of this school. There is no reason to suppose that he has materially changed his position since the beginning of the movement. He has often been accused by opponents of unfairness in controversy, and there certainly is in his reasonings an extreme subtlety which we associate rather with the idea of a Jesuit priest than of an Anglican clergyman. But there can be no question as to the character of his teaching and influence. He is the exponent and defender of a system which the world has been accustomed to regard as distinctive of Popery. It is not Popery, for it knows no Pope; it is not Romanism, for, despite the desire which Dr. Pusey has expressed for reconciliation between the two Churches, and which took form in an Eirenicon, by which the most precious principles of

Protestantism would have been sacrificed, there has been no response to these overtures, and the schism remains unhealed. But it is mediævalism, without a feeling or idea in sympathy with the free spirit of our own day; it is a sacerdotalism that puts aside the rights of Christ's people; it is a sacramentarianism which materializes the simplest rites of His religion, and corrupts the spirituality of His teaching. Not only does it abjure distinctive Protestant doctrine, but it tramples out the Protestant spirit. Throughout the course of his long life Dr. Pusey has waged this war against Protestant freedom with an unbending resolve. A mediæval missionary, dwelling in the midst of a pagan population, could not have sought more earnestly to combat against their idolatry than this great Oxford divine has laboured to overthrow the heresy by which his fellow-countrymen have been seduced from the faith of the "Holy Catholic Church." He has spared no effort to magnify the priestly office which he claims. He is known far and wide as the most trusted confessor in the Anglican Church. He was the first boldly to proclaim a doctrine of the Real Presence. How far he has encouraged the introduction of the advanced ritual is a point which is only known to those who are acquainted with the inner life of the party; but he has been the teacher of the doctrine that is symbolized, and he has always defended those who have thought it right to adopt this kind of ceremonial.

Anglican Protestantism has had no more subtle or deadly foe, yet his position is unchallenged. He was silenced for a time by his University, and as appears from a remarkable correspondence in the life of Bishop Wilberforce, that bishop thought it necessary to inhibit

his preaching in his diocese. But he has not been a defendant in any of the suits which have been instituted against the school, and there is a strange tendency in many quarters to abate the estimate of the mischief he has done in consideration of his personal qualities. To those who desire to preserve the Establishment and at the same time to maintain its Protestant character it cannot be consolatory to find that in the efforts which Bishop Wilberforce felt himself compelled to make for the repression of Romanizing tendencies, he had to meet the resistance of men in high station, and with great social and political influence. It is certainly idle to suppose that Ritualism can be stamped out while the man who has done more than any other for its development is a Regius Professor at Oxford, is supported by others—deans and canons—only inferior to himself in attainments and influence.

"Ritualism," we were early told by one of its most able and zealous advocates, Dr. Littledale, "is the object lesson of religion," and it was introduced with the view of attracting the working-classes. Anglo-Catholicism seemed to be only a religion for gentlemen. Ritualism was designed to make it a religion for the poor; and in order to accomplish this, it introduced the histrionic element. What the "object lesson" was intended to teach it is not difficult to discover. The authority of the priest and the mystical grace of the sacrament are the ideas set forth in every one of its symbols.

III.

A man of broader views or of more massive intellect than the late Bishop of St. David's never sat on the

Episcopal Bench. With eagle eye he looked out upon the troubled sea of disputation which these ritual teachings were beginning to lash into a fury, and he discerned the true nature of the currents.. He loved the Established Church, but he would not allow even that affection to restrain his courageous utterances against a party which weaker spirits seem afraid to offend. In his charge of 1866 he thus describes the true character of the ritual which we are so frequently asked to regard as a mere matter of taste, and as an illustration of the influence that art culture has exercised even over religious worship. "The fact which presents itself most obviously on the surface of the whole matter is the change which has been made in the administration of the Lord's Supper. The Communion service of the Prayer Book is set, as it were, in the frame of the Roman Catholic ceremonial, with all the accompaniments of High, or chanted Mass, vestments, lights, incense, postures and gestures of the officiating clergy. It is interspersed with corresponding hymns, and supplemented by private prayers translated from the Roman Missal. To make the resemblance more complete, several of the clearest directions of our own rubric are disobeyed, and the Roman observance substituted for that appointed by our Church. To the eye hardly anything appears to be wanting for an exact identity between the two liturgies, and it is but rarely that any difference can be detected by the ear." [1] That is an intelligent and impartial account of the ritual which a certain section of Broad Churchmen argue must be retained in order to prevent the establishment of perfect religious equality in this country. Its meaning is that the ritual is intended to educate the people in

[1] *Charges*, vol. ii. p. 158.

the doctrine of the Real Presence with all its attendant superstitions. It is only Erastians who are so infatuated by love of a National Church that they do their utmost to hide from themselves and from others the essential facts.

It is fair to the "Catholic" school to say that they have never attempted to deny that this is their view. In the early stages of the Tractarian movement there was no care about the ritual. The Tractarians were half afraid to attract public notice and opposition by a service which would have been the proper development of their doctrinal teaching. And the Ritualists of his day were described by Mr. Faber as "playing at Mass, putting ornament before truth, suffocating the inward by the outward, bewildering the poor instead of leading them, revelling in Catholic sentiment instead of offering the acceptable sacrifice of hardship and austerity; this is a painful, indeed a sickening, development of the peculiar iniquity of our times, a masterpiece of Satan's craft." It was not that Mr. Faber disliked the ritual, but he feared that it might displease the people and impede the spread of the doctrine. Hence, if the Romish ritual was employed at all, it was done secretly, and an eminent leader like Faber regarded those who were so eager about ceremonial as though they were occupied too much about the "beggarly elements of the world."

Mr. Walter, in a speech on the Public Worship Regulation Act, gave an account of his own experiences at Oxford, which is in exact accord with this view. Speaking of Mr. Gladstone he said: "His right honourable friend left the University of Oxford at the beginning of that great movement of which

they were now witnessing the results, and was not there at the time when the great and distinguished men who originated the movement were in the zenith of their popularity and power. He (Mr. Walter) was. He drank in every word they preached and read everything they wrote. There was no mention of Ritualism in those days. Nothing could be simpler or plainer than the Church services conducted by Dr. Newman at St. Mary's and at Littlemore. There was no attempt to imitate a 'high altar;' no children were dressed up as acolytes; and there was no incensed or any other of the clerical arrangements which were now designed to teach the doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass."

A stronger justification of the intensity of feeling in relation to ritual could hardly have been supplied than that which this observation of Mr. Walter furnishes. The doctrine to which he listened at St. Mary's was, though not with any purpose on the part of the preacher, ever pointing Romeward. Yet it was not until it had been translated into ritual that even so clearheaded a man as Mr. Walter became convinced of its perilous tendencies. It is not wonderful, therefore, that those who see in this Romeward movement a menace to liberty and progress, as well as to pure Christianity, should regard with special anxiety the attempt to make its teachings attractive to the people at large. So long as the movement was kept within the University, and its efforts restricted to the intelligent, the educated, and the refined, nothing could be more effective than those extraordinary parochial sermons by which Mr. Walter seems to have been so deeply impressed. But when it went forth into the ruder and rougher world beyond, its ends could be promoted better by imposing spectacle

than by the most popular orators. To-day it is helped more by the gorgeous ritual of St. Alban's than by the thrilling eloquence with which the leaders of the party awaken the echoes of St. Paul's. It might therefore have from the first been predicted as a certainty that Tractarianism would either die out, or that it would adopt a more dramatic ceremonial in order to recommend its teachings to large masses of the people, who would not be at all impressed by the most elaborate demonstration of the right of apostolical succession, and still less by the subtleties of sacramentarian teaching. In short, the two elements of Catholic influence could not have remained permanently divorced.

IV.

It is sometimes asserted that the people want ritual, and that the clergy simply accede to their desires. The argument is scarcely worthy of serious refutation. The congregations which have a desire for elaborate ritual have either been carefully trained by their priests in sacramentarian doctrine, or else have caught the spirit of ecclesiastical sensationalism, and are desirous to secure for their own churches the attractions of the art, the music, and the ceremonial of which they have heard elsewhere. It may be conceded, indeed, that the Anglican laity were heartily tired of the three-deckers, the clerk, and the other accompaniments of Low Church service, with which they were familiar thirty or forty years ago; and that they have thoroughly appreciated the improved style of architecture, the more imposing character of the interior of their churches, the more cultivated style of music which has prevailed, and per-

haps, above all, the system of hearty response which is characteristic of the High Church service. But that the love of priestly decoration and scenic display has extended so far amongst the English people as to force upon the clergy the adoption of their many-coloured vestments, the flaunting of banners, and the array of pompous processions, is absolutely incredible, and, if it were true, would reflect but little credit upon the clergy who yielded to so unreasonable a request.

In strange contradiction to such a theory is the fact that the first popular excitement in relation to the Tractarian party was the result of ritual changes which at the present time would be regarded as trivial and insignificant. The surplice riots both in London and Exeter were indicative of a popular prejudice against any change in the dress of the minister. So early as 1842 the question of ritual began to assume some importance, and Bishop Blomfield, who, though a decided High Churchman, had no real sympathy with the Tractarian party, recommended the adoption of the surplice in preaching and certain ritual changes extremely offensive to the decided Evangelical party. His lordship was one of the men who work mischief by too fussy an interference with points that had better be left alone. He had infinite faith in a policy of moderation and in himself as its true and authoritative interpreter. His own aim was to be a correct Churchman, removed alike from the fanaticism of the Evangelical and of the High Churchman, and he felt that the crisis called for the distinct exposition of his views. His intention was to mediate, and his belief was that this could best be done by insisting on closer conformity to the rubrics. The result of his ill-timed advice was the commencement

of a fierce and angry excitement which did not all at once subside, and to which he was to some extent compelled to succumb.

Exeter had a High Church bishop of a much more decided stamp, and under his sanction, if not at his instigation, it was determined to carry out considerable ritual changes. But the resistance of the people was still more passionate, more determined, and more menacing than in the metropolis. In some cases numbers of the congregation quitted the church on seeing the minister ascend the pulpit stairs in the surplice, while in others there were more alarming displays of popular indignation. Mr. Courtenay, of St. Sidwell's, who was the Ritualist hero or fanatic of the time, aroused such a frenzy of indignation in the city—and not so much among its rowdies as among the better classes of the citizens—that the mayor and the magistrates were compelled to request the bishop to urge him to discontinue his practices in order to avert absolute bloodshed. Such incidents, however discreditable, certainly afford no countenance to the suggestion that ritual alterations had their origin in a popular demand.

A few years later the contest was again transferred to the diocese of London. The atmosphere at the time was charged with electricity, owing to what was denominated the "papal aggression." The Pope's bull, dividing the country into Romish dioceses, brought visibly before the minds of the nation the fact that Romanism had been advancing with such rapidity as to induce its head to believe that the time had come when he could safely venture to treat England as a part of Catholic Christendom, and to give it a regular hierarchical government. Lord John Russell's celebrated Durham letter on the

occasion has often been the subject of ridicule, and, if judged by a purely political standard, or even with regard to the measures which he subsequently introduced, it perhaps deserves the criticism which has been so freely lavished upon it. But there is one feature in it which is too commonly forgotten, that merits very different judgment. His lordship did not content himself with denouncing the action of a foreign ecclesiastic, but, speaking with the free spirit of a sound Liberal and with the sagacity of a true statesman, pointed out the circumstances which fully justified the anxiety of Protestants. "There is a danger, however, which alarms me much more than any aggression of a foreign sovereign. Clergymen of our own Church, who have subscribed the Thirty-nine Articles, and acknowledged in explicit terms the Queen's supremacy, have been the most forward in leading their flocks, 'step by step,' to the very edge of the precipice. The honour paid to saints, the claim of infallibility for the Church, the superstitious use of the sign of the cross, the muttering of the liturgy so as to disguise the language in which it was written, the recommendation of auricular confession, and the administration of penance and absolution—all these things are pointed out by clergymen of the Church of England as worthy of adoption, and are now openly reprehended by the Bishop of London in his charge to the clergy of his diocese."

There is a ring of strength and truth in this worthy of the man and of the subject. It was not a mere piece of political bunkum, still less of Protestant bigotry, but the sober warning of a clear-headed and sound-hearted English statesman. Lord John Russell was opposed to Romanism because Romanism was the enemy of popular freedom; and he directed attention to these Tractarian

aggressions because he saw that they were the true cause of that papal action which had at once irritated and alarmed the English people. Whether his method of dealing with the papal bull was expedient or not, it will scarcely be questioned now that he struck at the root of the whole mischief in thus sternly denouncing the conduct of the Anglican clergymen who were acting as the pioneers of Rome. His words touched a chord in the heart of the nation at the time, and their wisdom is even better understood now. Had his lordship anticipated a time when the secessions to Rome would be diminished in number only because these Romanizers had secured such indulgence within the pale of the Established Church that the necessity for a withdrawal to Rome has ceased, except for those who could not reconcile themselves to the idea of a separation from the Pope and the Catholicity of which he is the representative, his protest would have been even more emphatic. The effect of his appeal at the time was to arouse Protestant feeling against the Romanizing clergy, and Mr. Bennett, who survives to exult over the progress made by his party, was one of its victims.

V.

St. Barnabas' church, Knightsbridge, had just been built, and, for the time, was the fashionable shrine of the new cult. What St. Alban's, Holborn, has been in a later stage of the movement, St. Barnabas' was at its commencement. It had been finished in a high style of ecclesiastical architecture, and Mr. Bennett introduced into the service everything that could attract the eye or please the ear. It was in vain that his diocesan had

rebuked these ritualistic excesses as "a poor imitation of the Roman ceremonial, furnishing to the observant members of that Church a subject, on the one hand, of ridicule, as being a faint and meagre copy of their own gaudy ritual, and, on the other hand, of exultation, as preparing those who take a delight in them to seek a further gratification of their tastes in the Roman communion." Mr. Bennett paid as little attention to the wishes of his ecclesiastical ruler as Messrs. Dale and Enraght to the decrees of Lord Penzance. The result of his persistence in his own course was a series of shameful disturbances, which ultimately compelled the retirement of Mr. Bennett. For violence of this kind there can be no apology. So far from serving the cause on whose behalf it is evoked, it only calls forth such sneers as those in which the bishop's son and biographer indulges when he tells his readers that the "Protestant cause was taken up by those to whom all religions were equally indifferent and all excuses for a riot equally acceptable; and every Sunday saw the church doors besieged by a mob of disorderly supporters of the Reformation, and the services interrupted by their groans or hisses." [1]

There were other elements in these disturbances besides those which the clerical censor acknowledges; but no candid man would deny that such lawless action is ever unintelligent and capricious and equally indefensible, whether directed against an Evangelical bishop, as recently in a Lambeth church, or against a Ritualist clergyman, as in the case of Mr. Bennett or of Mr. Bryan King, of St. George's in the East. The disturbances at St. Barnabas' were as unworthy

[1] *Bishop Blomfield's Life*, vol. ii. p. 146.

as the defiance of all law by which they were provoked. So far as they mean anything, however, they negative the supposition that the laity forced the innovations upon the clergy. The case is a type of numbers of others; indeed, of the whole. The original idea came from the clergyman who educated a congregation into agreement with his views, but who aroused an opposition, expressed partly in the rude deeds of rough mobs and partly in the fiery condemnations thundered forth by *The Times* of that day, which left little doubt as to the real state of popular opinion. It would, indeed, have been little short of a marvel if the English people had unexpectedly been seized with an ardent desire for certain points of ritual which have never had a place in their Reformed Church. That some congregations had been trained into a liking for them is credible, but even with them it has been a matter of culture, not of spontaneous liking; while, so far as the people are concerned, there has been no mistake from the outset as to their opinion. It may have been a stupid and unintelligent prejudice, but about its nature there could be no doubt.

In reply to this we shall be referred to St. Alban's, Holborn, and some other places where the self-denying labours of Ritualist clergymen have resulted in the gathering of considerable congregations, who are attached to their clergy, who love the services to which they have been accustomed, and in which perhaps many of them have been trained to take a part, who, with the spirit characteristic of free Englishmen, resent any action which has even the semblance of persecution. The facts are admitted, but they do not prove either that the desire for the ritual proceeded from the people, or that, if it had done so, it ought to be gratified in a

National Church. It may appear hard to interfere with any men who are doing a faithful and earnest work among the wilds of English paganism, but, on the other hand, it is even more hard that those who believe that the good which these priests accomplish is marred by the superstition which they are fostering, should, as citizens, be made responsible for the teaching of an error they detest. The hardship consists in the existence of a National Church. If Mr. Mackonochie speaks and acts as a priest of the "Holy Catholic Church" the Church only is responsible, but as a clergyman of the National Church he speaks in the name of the nation, and the nation must determine whether his doctrine is in accordance with its mind. This is the fact which is systematically left out of account in all this talk about the will of the people. In an Established Church there is but one legitimate way in which that will can be expressed, and that is through its constitutional representatives in Parliament.

VI.

The history of the Public Worship Regulation Act is alone sufficient to negative the supposition that the Romanized ritual around which this strife has been waged is acceptable to the English nation. A measure more offensive, not only to the High Church party, but to the clergy in general, has not been passed by the legislature for many a day; but there has not been one, except it be some great recognition of popular demand, which was received with more acceptance by the people in general. It has subsequently been discredited by the repeated failures of prosecutions instituted under it, which

have awakened a suspicion that so bad a piece of workmanship was never intended to work, or to be anything more than a concession to Protestant susceptibility. But the feeling with which it is now regarded, because of its failure, must not be transferred to the time of its introduction. When the Primate placed himself at the head of the defenders of the Protestantism of the Anglican Church against a powerful body of conspirators, and summoned to his aid "all those who glory in the name of the members of the Church of England, who have no feelings of Puritanism in any form, but who have often fought the battles of the Church of England against the Church of Rome on the one hand, and against Puritanism on the other, who style themselves Anglicans and regard the Church as one of our great institutions," "to come forward and declare themselves manfully against such a desecration of the Holy Communion as a thing which all Churchmen should unite in condemning," he stirred unquestionably a considerable amount of enthusiasm in the nation. The desecration was the surrounding of the Lord's Supper with those practices in which Ritualism delights and which the Archbishop had described at great length; and these bold words were regarded as a distinct challenge to the Ritualist party, and hailed with acclamation by the vast majority both of the Church and the nation.

The Archbishop had certainly no reason to complain of any lack of heartiness in the popular response. His utterances were welcomed as a sensible relief to the anxieties of multitudes who had become seriously alarmed as to the tendencies at work in the Established Church. These apprehensions were not confined to those whose Protestantism is little better than a national

prejudice, or those with whom it is so intense and even passionate a feeling that they scent Romanism in the most trivial and innocent innovation ; they were shared by Churchmen of a more secular temper, who were attached to the Establishment because of its supposed freedom from mysticism in its theology and sacerdotalism in its offices, and who saw with mingled disgust and indignation the steady advance of a priestly class, resting its power on antiquated dogma, and seeking to attract the favour of the giddy multitude by spectacle and show. A smaller company than either of these, earnestly concerned for the future not only of their Church but of religion in the nation, and believing that the spread of these mediæval superstitions, falling in with some of the most dangerous moral elements at work in these days, was a far-reaching evil of the gravest kind, regarded the whole state of things with unaffected sorrow. The last class found less encouragement in the Archbishop's assurances than any of the others, but even they participated to some extent in the common hopefulness with which they were heard.

It is painful to read that memorable language in the light of subsequent events. If there was a conspiracy against Protestantism then, it is not only unbroken, but it has gained new force in the intervening years. The crisis of 1874 is aggravated in all its symptoms in 1881, and whatever the danger that existed then, it is much more formidable now. The "desecration of the Holy Communion" remains unchecked. The "Mass in masquerade" continues, but with more of the Mass and less of the masquerade. Yet what has the Archbishop done to justify the hopes which he then awakened? For practical purposes the Public Worship

Act has proved little better than a mere *fiasco.* It was certainly not passed for the sake of imprisoning a few recusant clergymen, but in order to suppress an obnoxious and illegal system of worship; and now, after seven years, not an approach has been made towards the attainment of the object. The contempt put upon law and upon one of its courts and judges is a point which ought to engage the attention of politicians. The utter failure to put down a dangerous conspiracy, and to save the most sacred service of the Church from desecration, is a matter that belongs rather to the Primate, who warned the Church of a peril which nothing has been done to mitigate, much less to remove.

A failure so melancholy has not been due to want of popular sympathy. There was much that was pitiable, not a little that was ludicrous, in the history of the Bill, but the one point which was reassuring was the intensity of Protestant feeling which was elicited. In striking contrast with the vacillation of bishops, more intent on saving their own authority than on defending the national Protestantism, was the fervid popular feeling of the hour. It may have partaken largely of Philistine stupidity, but at least it was sincere and earnest. The Public Worship Regulation Act, indeed, received a treatment far too indulgent, for there was such general satisfaction with the idea that at last something was to be done that comparatively little thought was given to the consideration of what was actually done. A tempest of indignation swept over the House of Commons, whose members nursed the agreeable delusion that they were doing something for the vindication and defence of an outraged Protestantism. The ordinary distinctions of party were set aside, and the two front

benches were houses divided against themselves. The Prime Minister of the day, to whom even his most ardent devotee never ascribed a deep religious feeling, much less a keen susceptibility to Protestant opinions or interests, presented himself to the excited Protestants of the nation in the novel character of an ecclesiastical leader, and avowed his resolution to put down Ritualism. There could be no truer indication of the real temper of the hour. There must have been a strong belief in the strength of the national passion when a leader so astute thus braved the anger of a powerful section of his own clerical supporters, and even so far transgressed the ordinary bonds of political courtesy and prudence as to caution the House against being affected by the words of one of his own Cabinet, hereafter to be his *fidus Achates* in difficult negotiations and popular triumphs, as a "master of gibes and flouts and jeers." So eminent a political strategist did not mistake the spirit of the people, and if he had been really intent on the accomplishment of his avowed design he would have achieved success. The Protestantism of the nation had been exasperated, and there was an eager craving for prompt and decided action. It was in vain that the conscientious and eminent statesman, who so lately had wielded supreme power, and was in a few years to wield it again, and who had a truer conception of Protestant principle than those who vaunted it so loudly, pleaded with his accustomed eloquence against legislation so precipitate and, as he thought, impolitic and unjust. Popular favour had deserted him for the time, and his political position itself was materially weakened by a doubt as to his ecclesiastical sympathies. The Parliament was resolved, and the only changes made in the original scheme were in the direction of greater stringency.

VII.

Seldom has so much commotion been created by so small a Bill. It is a common idea that the Act gave some clearer definition of the law relative to rubrics and ritual, or even introduced some new provisions. There could be no greater fallacy. That was clearly what was necessary. An Act of Parliament might at once have removed all doubts as to the Ornaments Rubric, the Advertisements of Elizabeth, the position of the celebrant, the robes of the priests, and the various knotty questions which have so heavily taxed legal subtlety, and occupied so much of the time of our Courts. But that would have raised a direct issue between the Church and the State, and it is the chief aim of our ecclesiastics and statesmen to avoid this conflict. It would probably be wiser under such circumstances to abstain from all legislation for the Church, and this *laissez faire* policy is that which has been generally adopted. The departure from the ordinary course in the hope of putting down Ritualism is only another sign of the strength of the popular feeling. The nation was too excited to scrutinize very carefully the proposals submitted to it, or it would have seen reason to doubt whether a new Court, whose action was very largely dependent on the action of individual bishops, would suffice to restrain the aggressions of an earnest, able, and aggressive party, with numerous sympathizers among all ranks of the clergy, and some even on the Episcopal Bench.

Lord Penzance's Court is the one product of the Act; but though the Government were fortunate in securing the services of an extremely able judge, and

so giving the new tribunal considerable *eclat*, its jurisdiction is too narrow and is hampered by too many conditions to make it efficient. It can only be set in action if the bishop of the diocese consents, and so whole dioceses may be excluded from its operation altogether. To suppose that such an instrument would effectually repress men possessed with all the enthusiasm of faith, conscious of the advantages of the position they hold, versed in all Church laws and practices, and resolved to use them to the utmost, was simply to indulge a mere delusion. A series of misadventures so singular and so continuous as almost to justify the suspicion that they cannot all have been the result of mistake or accident, has dogged the working of the Act; but after all it remains a standing proof of the desire of the nation to get rid of a style of ritual which so closely resembles that of Rome that, according to Bishop Thirlwall, only a practised eye can detect the differences in mere detail, which do not affect the essential agreement of spirit.

One of the chief difficulties in the controversy, as already indicated, arises out of the belief that the Judicial Committee has not been guided solely by legal considerations. The extreme High Church party have profited as much as any other by the tolerance of the law in relation to doctrine, for assuredly no teaching has ever been submitted to its judgment more flagrantly repugnant to the received ideas of Anglican dogma, and more contradictory to statements in the formularies, than that of Mr. Bennett, and yet it was only pronounced to be "perilously near" to heresy. But on matters of ritual they alone have been the sufferers. Suit after suit has been decided, either wholly or in part, against them. The practices to

which they attach most significance have been again and again distinctly forbidden. From the case of Westerton *v.* Liddell down to the celebrated Folkestone judgment, in the case of Mr. Ridsdale, they have suffered an unbroken series of defeats, the bitterness of which has hardly been relieved by the failure of their opponents on some few points. In one point of view, indeed, these exceptions from the general condemnation have been even more annoying and injurious to their cause than prohibitions. Take, for example, the Ridsdale judgment. Had it been as decided against the eastward position as against the sacerdotal vestments, the great High Church party, whose more moderate members have never worn the robes, but are very strong about the eastward position, would have been forced into protest and rebellion. The concession to the strong was not likely to be viewed with any special favour by the weaker section, who were only required to abandon the rites which they most prized, nor was it likely to inspire them with confidence or reverence for Courts which reversed the maxim of magnanimous statesmanship, and acted on the principle, *debellare subjectos, parcere superbis.*

The discussions which most of the judgments, but especially that in the Folkestone case have provoked, are a discredit to the judicial system in Church matters. Not only is the soundness of the decision openly arraigned, but motives are freely assigned for the action of the Judicial Committee which, could they be supposed to have any foundation, would be fatal to the authority of any civil Court in relation to which they were whispered. But in relation to the Privy Council Committee there is always an assumption, more or less distinctly

expressed, that it has a semi-legislative as well as a distinctly judicial character, and its judgments are discussed on this supposition. It is this fact that forms some excuse for the mode in which certain clergymen have set up their opinions on matters of law in opposition to those of the ablest judges of the land. There is a touch of absurdity in the idea of Dr. Littledale correcting the law of Lord Selborne and Lord Cairns, and other clergymen following his lead and refusing to obey the decision of a Court which not only wields supreme authority, but was composed of the ablest judges in the kingdom, because their private interpretation of the law differs from that of the Court. But our view of their objections is materially changed if it be be admitted that the Judicial Committee has a twofold character—that it has to give advice in relation to the Established Church as well as to administer its law, and that, so far from holding itself bound by the letter of the Statute Book, it has to show a proper care for individual freedom, and, beyond and above everything else, to watch *ne quid detrimenti ecclesia capiat.* Let this principle be once admitted, and the freest criticism becomes not only permissible and probable, but certain.

Even the Dean of Westminster sees this peril, and while maintaining that the Judicial Committee, of which he is the consistent eulogist and defender, has, on the whole, been a blessing to the Church, is unable to conceal from himself the possibilities of danger attaching to the action of a body whose position is so anomalous. "There is no question that, on the whole, its decisions have tended to widen rather than to narrow the basis of the Church. But nevertheless they have been procured at the risk of much agitation and heart-burning; there is

always the chance of even its judgments being shaken by the popular feeling of the moment; there have been judgments delivered, and there may be again, of which the avowed purpose was not to include but to exclude unpopular persons or opinions."[1] This is what is always to be anticipated when a judicial body assumes that it may admit the play of other considerations beside those of law. For a time the wisdom or moderation or liberal temper of its members may incline it to use its authority to promote tolerance and make the Church more comprehensive; but the composition of the tribunal may change, and another spirit become predominant in its counsels, or a popular feeling may grow up, against which there is no strength, even if there were disposition, to contend, and in such a case the friends of liberty may well regret the folly which led them to trust to the capricious and uncertain ruling of judges rather than to the fixed and unchanging action of settled law.

Under all circumstances, one fatal defect in this ingenious method of giving the Church an elasticity and comprehensiveness by means of judicial decisions, which cannot be obtained by parliamentary enactment, is that it is sure to excite restlessness and discontent on the part of any whom the Courts, which are guided by statesmanlike considerations, feel bound to condemn. This is what has happened in relation to the Ritualists. Looking back to the Ridsdale judgment, which has been the real cause of the present conflict between a section of the clergy and the law, it is easy to see that the decision reached was precisely that which worldly wisdom would approve. Politicians reasoning on the point would naturally agree that, if they prohibited the eastward

[1] *Essays on Church and State.* Preface, p. xxiii.

position, the High Church party, including even those of its numbers who did not adopt it themselves, would secede; whereas, on the other hand, if they permitted the use of the vestments, they feared the people. In either case the Establishment would be destroyed, and to preserve the Establishment was their first business. It may be that these were not the reasons which influenced the Privy Council Committee in adopting their extraordinary decision; but at all events the reasoning is sound and quite sufficient to vindicate their course if the question be made one of public policy. On the other hand, the legal defence of the judgment is so extremely weak that it may be doubted whether it ever satisfied any impartial mind. One of the most acute lawyers on the tribunal strongly dissented from the opinion of his colleagues, and the fierceness with which he was attacked for allowing this difference to become known suggested the doubt whether his colleagues were perfectly satisfied as to the legality of their own conclusions.

All this ought to be remembered by those who bring against the Ritualists the charge of lawlessness. Even after such pleas have been allowed their full weight, it must still be said that the rights of judges must be maintained. But it cannot be asserted that the resistance of the offending clergy is so wantonly defiant of authority as is commonly represented. The Judicial Committee may have rightly understood the interests of the Church, but it is much more questionable whether they have given a true interpretation of the law. To ordinary readers the Ornaments Rubric seems to warrant the use of the robes which Ritualists love, and the argument that other order was taken in the Advertisements

is, to put it in the mildest form, far from being conclusive. Unfortunately, too, if a new suit were instituted, the decision would be entrusted to a body constituted similarly to that against whose judgment the appeal would lie, and would probably be governed by the same principles. The dilemma is an extremely awkward one, and is the result of a strange confusion of thought as to the real functions of the Judicial Committee. Erastians may suppose that the Establishment will be saved by the exercise of a moderating influence, but the danger which this tampering with sound principle has created becomes more apparent every day. The loss of confidence in the impartiality of judicial bodies is one of the greatest evils which can occur. The first and certain result is anarchy—anarchy such as we see in the Establishment at the present moment, and of anarchy the English people will not long be tolerant. For a period they may bear it with exemplary patience, and those who see their outward demeanour little suspect the contempt and indignation slumbering beneath, until their endurance is worn out and a sudden outburst of determined energy indicates their determination to save institutions which they have been accustomed to honour from the contempt to which the eccentricity and obstinacy of a few misguided individuals have exposed them. It is true that the Ritualists have at present to bear the odium of proceedings which are regarded by the people as nothing short of a scandal; but though condemnation may come first on them, the probability is that it will ultimately include the Establishment itself in its sweep. If it were safe to indulge in any forecast of the future, nothing certainly would appear more certain than these two points; first, that the Establishment could not long

survive the secession of the Ritualists, and, second, that this cannot be averted except by a toleration of what is generally denounced as their lawlessness.

The opponents of Church establishments may consistently object to these prosecutions, though, on the other hand, they might with equal propriety insist that the conditions on which the State has granted exclusive privileges should be observed, and the law be respected by those on whom its special favours are conferred. As to all others, they have appealed unto Cæsar, and to Cæsar they must go. If the tactics of any party are unscrupulous, or their weapons illegitimate; if they seek to obtain unrighteous advantage, to influence legal decisions by popular clamour, or if they trust to appeals to policy rather than to law, they are open to condemnation; but any objection to reference to Cæsar sounds very strangely when coming from those who shelter themselves behind the throne on which Cæsar sits, surround themselves with the pomp which Cæsar can confer, and are enriched by the emoluments which Cæsar has to give.

The struggle by which the Church is at present convulsed can never be understood unless it be recognized that behind every other point for which the Ritualists have contended lies this determination to maintain the right of the Holy Catholic Church. It would seem as though they had only recently awakened up to a perception that they are absolutely under the control of the State. It has been the object of our rulers generally to mitigate as far as possible the pressure of State rule upon ecclesiastics. They have veiled it under specious disguises. They have sought to give it an appearance of an ecclesiastical origin. They have pre-

served antiquated Church forms when they had lost their reality, and until the rise of the Tractarian party they had admirably succeeded in maintaining a semblance of spiritual authority which concealed the reality of secular rule. The strong assertions of sacerdotal rights have only elicited a more decided assertion of that secular power which was always supreme, but had astutely concealed its actual character. The transfer of power from the old Court of Delegates to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council was a very decided step in the establishment of a more visible, though not more real, secular jurisdiction. The relegation of the bishops to the position of assessors of the Committee was a further advance in the same direction. The advisory functions which have been attributed to that body, and which it has certainly exercised with considerable latitude, have made the tribunal itself still more obnoxious; but the crowning piece of provocation has unquestionably been the Public Worship Regulation Act, followed by the appointment of Lord Penzance, who, while he takes the place of the "old official" principals of the provincial courts of Canterbury and York, has been appointed by civil authority, holds his office by virtue of the Act of Parliament, and is himself "a layman," is a lay judge of a Queen's Court, and asserts his superiority to canons by which the laity are not bound.

This has gone as an iron into the clerical heart, and the more it is considered, the less surprising will that fact appear. "The Church's sense of wrong," as Canon Liddon expresses it, is very deep, and, accepting the principles from which he starts, is perfectly intelligible and consistent. "Legally speaking, Lord Penzance may henceforth be the undisputed judge of the Provincial Court

of Canterbury; but it is certain that, speaking ecclesiastically and morally, he represents a very different kind of authority from that of the judges who have heretofore filled that venerable chair." Even those who do not adopt the "Catholic" theory ought still to be able to understand it. Canon Liddon and some of those who are allied with him are men of high intelligence, who are not likely to have heedlessly taken up a position which is absurd on the face of it. They are themselves so thoroughly satisfied of its soundness and justice that, if their words mean anything, they show that their view must be wholly or partially accepted if they are to continue within the Establishment. An impartial examination of it is essential to the formation of any opinion as to the future of the State Church. It certainly could not continue to exist if the section of which the eloquent Canon is one of the chief leaders were to secede. The question that presents itself for consideration is, Is it possible or expedient in the interests of the nation to make the concessions which seem necessary in order to avert their withdrawal?

The present controversy, though related to, is still distinct from the original one about ritual. It is controversy as to the authority of the Court and of the law by which it has been established. The same principle of "Catholic" authority lies at the root of the contention in both cases, but it is developed in different relations. Ritualists cling to their ceremonial because they hold that it is a "Catholic" use; they protest against the authority of Lord Penzance because it is a violation of the independence of the "Catholic" Church. When the mode in which they treat the monitions or requests of their bishops is considered, it is hard to resist the con-

viction that they have little respect for any authority; but in order to argue their case, it is essential to accept the statements which are the basis of their contention.

To the ordinary Englishman their position is as unintelligible as it is intolerable. A few simple propositions, which it is not easy to controvert, are with him decisive of the whole matter. Here is a law passed by Parliament in the ordinary way, and having all the authority of any other Act in the Statute Book. It constituted a Court, and gave it a definite jurisdiction in certain matters, and that Court has issued certain prohibitions or monitions to Mr. Mackonochie, Mr. Dale, and Mr. Enraght. If these gentlemen obey, there is no desire to mulct or punish them for their offences; but if they resolutely persist in the forbidden practices, there is no alternative but to inflict the penalties of law. This is the common-sense view which, with a large class of men, settles everything so conclusively that they soon grow impatient of any contradiction. That a suitor who has lost his case should then question the authority of the judge by whom it has been tried, or should set up his own interpretation of the law, and insist that it is the right one, and should not only maintain this in speech but translate it into action, appears to men of this stamp nothing less than a disturbance of the first principles of all law and all society. They know it would not be endured in the case of a civilian, and they refuse to recognize any special privilege of clergy.

Hence the imprisonment of good men, who were only obeying their consciences, has been regarded with extraordinary indifference. When Mr. Tooth was committed to Horsemonger Lane gaol, the novelty of the spectacle startled the world, and some transient excite-

ment was aroused. But the imprisonment of later victims has not produced even this amount of feeling. The nation, which is ready enough to express emphatic condemnation of any real wrong, has shown marvellous apathy in relation to these sacerdotal martyrs. The simple explanation is that the people do not see where the grievance lies, but, on the contrary, regard the action of the clergy as sheer lawlessness. They reason that Ritualists have only to submit to the law in order to escape all annoyance, and if the law is one which their consciences will not allow them to obey, they have only to leave the Church in which the law obtains. Former sufferers for conscience' sake have had to endure cruel trial of scourging, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. All that is demanded of these new witnesses is that they lay down their exceptional position as favourites of the law, since they are no longer able to deport themselves as loyal subjects of the law.

There is much to be said in favour of the practical view. But it would be misleading, as well as unfair, to suppose that the Ritualist would accept this as an exhaustive representation of the case. He would admit, of course, that he disobeys a particular law, but he would deny that he thereby sets aside any authority which he is bound to reverence, or violates any obligations which he contracted when he entered the Church. In his view, the Church is subjected to a tyranny, against which conscience constrains him to protest, and the only way in which he can enter this protest effectively is by refusing obedience to the monitions of the judge. He would have secured more weight for his protest against what he regards as illegitimate authority had he been more careful to show proper re-

spect to those whose right to govern him he does admit. The fundamental principle of Episcopalianism is the authority of the bishop, but the first maxim of the Ritualist is his own right to ignore this authority should the bishop advise a course contrary to the wishes or opinions of his subordinates. Of all systems Episcopalianism gives the least room for the exercise of mere individualism, but the Ritualist view makes individualism supreme. Its advocates may probably be greatly startled and shocked by such a suggestion, and insist that they bow to the authority of the Catholic Church; but they are only deceived by words. When a man undertakes to set up his own standard of Catholicity, and to give his own interpretation to its decrees, he may fancy he is bowing to authority, but the authority he acknowledges is only the reflection of his own private judgment. His bishop enjoins upon him a certain course, and he pleads that he must respectfully (not always even respectfully) decline to obey him, for the law of the Catholic Church directs a different method. But the bishop is also subject to the same law, and to his own clergy is the outward and visible representative of that Catholicity, while their first duty is that of canonical obedience. At the best, this is, in the case of this perplexed parson, a conflict of two opposite duties—duty to the bishop who governs him in the name of the Catholic Church, and duty to the law of that Church as interpreted by himself—he having, however, renounced all right of private interpretation, and being bound to accept the jurisdiction of his ecclesiastical superior.

That Ritualists do not see their insubordination towards their bishops to be an extreme assertion of individualism, is probably owing to the fact that they form a party

who believe themselves to be the true representatives of Catholicity, and encourage one another in their special views. So far from being inclined to yield to bishops, they are much more inclined to condemn and ban the bishops who do not agree with them. Altogether they present a strange phenomenon, approaching to a paradox—as champions of authority who revel in anarchy and, while inculcating the most extreme ideas of authority, adopt the tone and bearing of the democrat in their own ecclesiastical procedure. All this does not dispose disinterested parties to listen to Ritualist contention with much forbearance. They would be more willing to discuss the jurisdiction of Lord Penzance if they saw greater willingness to submit to authority whose right is unquestioned. When they find men who are prepared to contest the decisions of every Court which does not pronounce in their favour, and who feel themselves warranted in disobeying any decision if their private opinion differs from that of the judges by whom it was pronounced, controversy is felt to be useless. But it is seldom well thus hastily to dismiss the arguments of men who are manifestly influenced by strong convictions, and give the best proof of this conscientiousness by submitting to imprisonment. Mistaken and inconsistent though they may be, it is still desirable, if possible, to discover the cause of their fallacy, and to point it out.

VIII.

It must be admitted that the reasoning with which Erastians, who acts as though every point was considered simply in its relation to the interests of the Establishment, endeavour to convince the Ritualist is

eminently unsatisfactory, and quite as fallacious as that of the Ritualists themselves. The great object is to prove that Disestablishment would work no change in their favour, inasmuch as Nonconformist Churches are also under the control of law, and may sometimes have their differences adjudicated in the civil Courts. This consideration seems to afford considerable relief to a certain class of minds, but it needs only to be closely examined in order to see that it fails altogether to touch the difficulty of the Ritualists. They do not complain that the civil Courts have the same jurisdiction over them as over others, but that their Church Courts are appointed not by the Church but by the nation. Their contention would not be easily answered but for the one point that makes all the difference in the case, that their Church claims to be the nation, and that the nation, therefore, usurps the rights which, in a true state of things, belong to the Church.

To ordinary observers the ecclesiastical Courts are nothing more than civil Courts exercising jurisdiction in ecclesiastical causes, and they fail to understand why Parliament should not deal with them as it does with any other division of the High Court of Judicature. But the clergy regard them in a very different light. To them they are the remnants of the independence which the Church once enjoyed, and the idea that they are to be brought under the control of the State, and their whole arrangements modified without the consent of Convocation, is offensive in the last degree. The Presbyterian Churches have their courts of session, their presbyteries, and their synods; the Congregationalists have their church meetings; the Methodists have circuit meetings, district meetings, and conferences. These are all Church

Courts under different names, and they all exercise jurisdiction over their own members, settling just such matters as those which come before Lord Penzance. If an individual suppose that he has suffered some civil wrong in consequence of the action of one of these bodies, he has a right of appeal to the civil Court in the same way that every citizen is entitled to seek the protection of the law when he has been subjected to unjust treatment. Societies and individuals are on the same footing in this respect, and there is no difference between one society and another. The Courts recognize no bar to their interference if there be a complaint to be heard or an alleged grievance to be redressed. These are such obvious truisms that it is scarcely to be supposed that the most exalted ideas as to the rights of the Church would lead any one to question them. It is not, so far as appears at present, to this right of civil Courts to deal with any supposed violation of justice even in the case of Church arrangements that Ritualists object, but to the establishment of distinct ecclesiastical courts. No Congregational Church, for example, would brook the appointment for it by the State of ecclesiastical tribunals to which its internal differences should be referred. Why should the Church of England be forced to submit to a humiliation which a Dissenting community would not tolerate?

The answer is obvious and conclusive. It is simply because the Church claims to be recognized by law as the Church of England. A "gathered Church," as our fathers were accustomed to describe it, collected out of a nation, not composed of a nation, associated by voluntary action, not born into fellowship, has an independent status and an inherent right of self-government. Its disadvantages

and difficulties are often set forth in contrast with the breadth, comprehensiveness, and general elevation of tone belonging to a National Church. But, at all events, the voluntary Church has this advantage, it governs itself. So, indeed, it may be said, does the National Church ; but that can only mean that the nation governs it. It is one of the inevitable incidents of this assumption of nationality that among the rulers of the Church there are some who have no sympathy with its Christian teachings or spiritual worship, who are unbelievers in the Lord whom it worships, and enemies of the cross it holds up before the eyes of men, who, in truth, may have no religious sentiment whatever, and may practically be pagans baptized or unbaptized, as the case may be. Such rule is simply intolerable to any man who has a true faith in Christ and His kingdom. But there is a way of escape, though only one way. The nation will never renounce its claims and allow a Church which retains a national character to enjoy spiritual independence and self-government. Deliverance from the rule of the nation can only be escaped by a renunciation of power and emoluments which the nation has bestowed. Independence means the loss of special privilege ; and if Anglicans cannot consent to this, but tenaciously cling to the distinction belonging to the National Church, they will elicit no sympathy when they complain of what they regard as the tyranny of the State. It is not the State which is oppressive, but they who want to evade their obligations to the State.

If they have ground to complain of any inequality of treatment, so far their case deserves consideration. It is not enough to say that their transgressions are more threatening to what Englishmen most value in their

National Church than those of any other party. That is a question of policy, and policy ought never to regulate the administration of law. There may be some trivial rubrical offences which have no significance, and which are the result solely of the change of custom or the force of circumstances, the tolerance of which is not to be fairly urged as a sign of any partiality to the transgressors; but it becomes a very different thing when this indulgence is extended to essential points of Christian doctrine. Arguments in favour of giving all but unfettered liberty to the teacher, while enforcing the law with unbending rigidity upon the priest, certainly do not commend themselves to unprejudiced minds. It may be that ritual more directly commits the Church, and that spectacle affects men more strongly than any oral teaching. But all this does not affect the law, and the one point to be determined is the law. If the law has been strained in order to admit wide diversities of doctrine, that indulgence will justifiably be pleaded by those who desire variety in ritual, and the sense of justice in the nation will so far sustain their contention as to require that the same principles shall govern the Courts in all cases.

IX.

Canon Liddon's argument is in substantial accord with this view. His reasoning, indeed, goes still further, and maintains that the final decision in all ecclesiastical matters should be vested in an ecclesiastical court. Recognizing the supremacy of the Crown, he would contend that its representatives in all matters relating to the Church should be ecclesiastical, as in all matters of State they should be civil judges. Church and State

would thus be effectually separated, though by a new and somewhat extraordinary process, which would leave the Church an independent authority, and devolve on the State only the duty of maintaining its supremacy. The Church would still be entitled to speak in the name of the nation, and as the representative of its faith, but the State, instead of exercising over it any control, either by means of its legislature or its ordinary Courts, would have to tolerate a wealthy corporation with enormous power, irresponsible to law, and governed by an independent judiciary. The underlying idea is that the Church must be supreme within its own dominion and in relation to its own affairs, and the Canon's proposals are intended to carry out this view.

First, the Public Worship Act must be repealed, and Lord Penzance's Court give place to some new scheme which would enable Provincial and Diocesan Courts, in their integrity, to re-enter on their old historical relation to the Church and the Episcopate. And, beyond and above all, "the supreme Court of Appeal should be reconstituted, so as to consist of bishops elected by the Episcopate, advised by lawyers, and if necessary by divines, with an appeal from its decisions, at least in matters of faith, to the whole body of English bishops." This is Canon Liddon's suggestion for the settlement. The State is to surrender its entire authority to the bishops. The bishops are to be the heads of their own diocesan courts; the bishops are to choose out of their number a Court of Appeal; in the last resort, the bishops as a whole are to decide all matters of doctrine. The Church would thus gain a power which it has never enjoyed since the days of the Reformation, and which neither pope nor king would have granted it

in earlier times. Canon Liddon compares the heroic resistance of Messrs. Dale and Enraght to the law to that with which Hampden braved the tyranny of Charles the First, and anticipates the time when "some historian of the Church of England will frame a paragraph to describe what is passing before our eyes, on the model of Hume's eulogy of Hampden." It is not necessary here to discuss at length the justice of the parallel between these recalcitrant clergymen and the great champion of English freedom; but it may be conceded that if the future tendency of the Anglican Church be as reactionary as that of the English nation has been steadily progressive, there may come a day when some ecclesiastical historian of the future, possessed with the spirit of Laud, may extol as heroes the men who suffered such mild martyrdom as the nineteenth century tolerates, in testimony of their faith in the grand principle of the supremacy of the Church. In Canon Liddon's view these clergymen are resisting a tyranny as intolerable as that which Charles the First endeavoured to set up. He honours them as the lovers of freedom honour Hampden, because they have protested in the only way open to them to protest against the usurpation by the State of authority over the Church. As the condition of peace and good working for the future, he asks that the State should grant all that they have asked. The State is invited to lay down its arms and make a capitulation without terms.

Where is such a demand likely to find any supporters? It is scarcely necessary to say that in the eyes of the Protestant party its origin alone is sufficient to condemn it. Evangelicals cannot be expected to unite in condemnation of a Court over whose creation they rejoiced, and the machinery of which they have themselves set in

action. There are Erastians who up to a certain point have sympathized with the Ritualists as the attacked if not the persecuted party. But they have done it with the express object of maintaining not of subverting the authority of the State. They despise priests and have no faith in sacraments, but they are ready to indulge these eccentricities in Ritualists, on condition that they will help to keep up a show of nationality and comprehensiveness by remaining within the Establishment. But submission to secular rule is the primary condition. The State is, on their theory, to be the instrument for keeping a proper check on the extravagant assumptions of the priesthood, and to relax its control would be to sacrifice the chief advantage of the arrangement. Their whole strength would therefore be certainly thrown on the other side. They would have the Courts tolerant and even indulgent to a fault, but the last scheme to which they would consent is the abolition of the present Courts and the establishment of an episcopal autocracy.

But will the party in whose cause the Canon has proved himself so chivalrous a champion be content to follow his lead in this matter? If they are to act in rigid consistency with their own principles, they will hardly consent to be governed by bishops appointed by the Crown. They may indeed allege that though the Crown nominates, the dean and chapter appoint; but after the collapse of all resistance in two separate cases when there was a strong feeling on the part of the chapter adverse to the nominee of the Crown, they cannot deceive themselves into the belief that there is any practical difference between the *congé d'élire* and the actual appointment. So fully is this admitted now

that in the case of the new bishoprics the sham is no longer preserved, and the Crown appoints absolutely. The choice, no doubt, must be made from among the ordained clergy, and the bishop himself is consecrated by the representatives of the Church; but he is appointed a bishop, and he becomes one of the court by which ecclesiastical causes are to be tried, in virtue of the favour of the State. The new tribunal, therefore, would surely be tainted in virtue of its origin. It might consist of ecclesiastics, but it would be of ecclesiastics who derived office, jurisdiction, and authority directly from the State. It is quite possible, therefore, that the old objections would start up in a new form. The history of the movement, from the time when it passed into its second stage, certainly does not justify the expectation that any special deference will be shown to the office or the wishes of the bishops. If either Mr. Dale or Mr. Enraght had been willing to defer to the advice of his bishop, even when given in the most kindly spirit, the recent difficulties would, in all probability, never have arisen. What reason is there to expect more deference to episcopal decisions simply because they are of a formal character and invested with the authority of a court which Parliament has established? When individual clergymen are determined on becoming self-constituted champions of the rights of the Church and interpreters of tradition, the task of finding a tribunal which will command their confidence and obedience is not easy. Having set up their own ideal of Anglican ritual, and having been condemned by the law for doing it, Ritualists now invite the nation to put a slight upon the judges, to dishonour the authority of law, and to reward them for their contumacy by establishing a new

system of judicature to which their consciences will allow them to yield loyal submission.

Canon Liddon seems to think it hard that Nonconformists should permit this application of law. "It is natural that those who on general grounds of policy object altogether to the present relations of Church and State in England should be anxious to perpetuate a condition of things which, at the least, presses hard upon the consciences of a large and influential section of the clergy. It is natural, although perhaps not quite generous, to insist that the advantages which the Church derives from her historical position in this country shall only be retained if she is willing permanently to submit to an anomalous judicature of modern origin which threatens her with something akin to suffocation." If the Canon had understood the position of Nonconformists he might perhaps have formed a more kindly estimate of their conduct. The advantage which they would deny the Church is not that which it derives from its historical position, but that which accrues from the privileges conferred by the State. The anxiety shown by Churchmen of all sections to retain these national distinctions is the best evidence of the value which they attach to them. Nonconformists have sacrificed them all for the sake of spiritual freedom, but they would be more than human if they could see with satisfaction the endeavour of those to whom unfair preference has been given to evade the very conditions on which it is enjoyed. But they have a stronger and nobler sentiment than the resentment of the injustice done to them and their Churches. They believe that the system to which these disputed rites and vestments belong is an enemy to the purity of spiritual religion, to the progress of

human freedom, and to all the true interests of a nation. They object, and they have a right to object, to its teachers being allowed to speak in the name of the nation, and being invested with such authority as the nation can bestow.

X.

The circumstances under which this extreme demand is urged make it still more impossible for it to be entertained. The eloquent appeals on behalf of the imprisoned clergy would give the impression that the Evangelical party have been harrying these obnoxious Ritualists; it would be more true to say that the Ritualists have been irritating, exasperating, worrying the Protestantism of the English nation. They have introduced ceremony and spectacle which, whether legal or not, had been disused in the Anglican Church for centuries, which, in truth, could not be said to have been used at all since the completion of the Reformation. They have done this, not for the gratification of taste merely, but with the view of educating the people into the superstitions of Rome. They have convulsed the Church for years with one daring advance after another, and whenever any attempt has been made to check their course, have filled the air with cries of persecution. In their view the Church was made for them, and the nation for the Church; not they for the Church, and the Church for the nation. They have exalted themselves alike above bishops and judges, and have proclaimed as distinctly as acts could proclaim that they were exempt from the rule of Parliament. "The lately imprisoned clergy," Canon Liddon tells us, "could not recognize the authority of Lord Penzance as an ecclesiastical judge, and they went

to prison rather than commit themselves to any action which would imply such recognition." In other words, the clergy determined that they were above Parliament and law, and they invite the nation to honour their resistance as martyrdom for conscience' sake, and to concede what practically means the supremacy of the priest.

There can be no mistake as to the nature of the conflict to which Protestantism is thus challenged ; it is simply the old battle with popery which it is required to fight over again. Whatever the name by which it may be called, this is an old foe, one which has resisted freedom and progress through past centuries, and which is opposing it everywhere to-day. Its representatives among ourselves may be able to delude unwary spirits amongst us by a somewhat ostentatious show of antagonism to Rome, going so far even as to assert that the only solid defence against Rome is that which they have been able to erect. But to intelligent Protestants Rome is a name of offence only as it is expressive of a detested principle and a cruel tyranny, and if the principle be enthroned, it matters little under what name it exercises a hated and despotic rule. Laud and Hildebrand were, no doubt, very different characters, and excited very different sentiments, but the spirit by which they were moved was essentially one, and the despotism they wielded equally remorseless in temper, if differing in the methods of its action. The one provokes more of contempt, the other of hatred, but this is due to the character of the men, not of the systems to which they belonged. The ambitious, arrogant, and overbearing Italian who built up the power of the Papacy and made it a terror to the mightiest monarchs of Europe, and the keen, persistent, narrow-minded, and despotic

Englishman who would have given his Church the same power in England as Rome had enjoyed in Catholic Christendom, and set up for himself at Lambeth a despotism as absolute as that of any of the Gregorys or Innocents, were both seeking the triumph of the same principle. The one was able to make a mighty emperor crouch in abject submission at his feet, while the other was forced to content himself with cutting off the ears of a few Puritans. The one occupied himself with the affairs of all Europe and appeared as in truth a ruler of princes, whereas the other was engaged, as Macaulay puts it in characteristic style, in "hungering for Puritans to pillory and mangle, plaguing the Cavaliers for want of somebody else to plague with his peevishness and absurdity, performing grimaces and antics in his own cathedral, continuing that inimitable diary which we can never see without forgetting the vices of his heart in the imbecility of his intellect." The one excites the indignant hatred of outraged freedom and humanity, while for the other the verdict of Macaulay seems sufficient: "Contemptuous mercy was the only vengeance which it became the Parliament to take on such a ridiculous old bigot." But they represented the one idea and sought the same end. Alike they would have subjected human conscience to the authority of the Church incarnated in the tyranny of the priest.

It is the sense of an impotence, which trenches on the ludicrous, attaching to the claims of an Anglican priesthood, that leads so many to forget that the pretension itself is precisely the same as that of Rome. They would not sit by in cool indifference if they saw the Romish hierarchy making any advances towards power. Still less would they do anything which might directly

or indirectly help the furtherance of its objects. But the Anglican clergy occupy a different position. They may call themselves priests, ape priestly airs, claim priestly authority, and pretend to priestly functions; but the ecclesiastical Liberals, whose one desire is to save the Establishment, by drawing into it every variety of opinion and tendency, persuade themselves that these pretensions may be treated as harmless idiosyncrasies. They see Clericalism troubling the peace of every nation in Europe, but on the continent it is sustained by a wide-spread organization, managed with consummate skill and supported by a great mass of dominant prejudice amongst the people. That English Clericals, who have detached themselves from this priestly confederation, with which, nevertheless, they have such vital sympathy, and who are here contending against both the popular traditions that rule the many and the deep religious convictions that penetrate and influence the few, will be able to obtain a similar power is to these optimist Erastians inconceivable. It may be that they are right in their general estimate of the opposing forces, and that insuperable obstacles bar the way to the supremacy of Clericalism in this free country. But it is to be noted that it has already developed a power and achieved victories which at one time, and that not long ago, would have been pronounced incredible. Each successive decade of the last half-century has witnessed a distinct and, in some instances, rapid advance of its influence, and yet, instead of the internal resistance to it growing more intense and decided with this fresh demand upon it, it has become feebler in tone, more hesitating in purpose, and altogether more nerveless and dispirited. Clericalism seems to have been sucking out the life of Evangelical simplicity

and liberal freedom. The great champions of Protestant freedom in the past knew that between Clericalism and progress there can be no compromise, and that Clericalism has too many forces in human nature working on its behalf to make it safe to suffer it to grow unchecked. But numbers of their followers seem unable to understand this. They trifle with an enemy, though all history is full of warnings as to the necessity of meeting it with steady and determined resistance.

Nonconformists cannot thus easily reconcile themselves to the growth of what they believe to be evil, and have themselves felt to be oppressive. Perhaps it may be because they have themselves felt how arrogant and even oppressive Anglican Clericalism may be that they are not so ready to believe in the mildness of its temper and the innocence of its aims. They judge of it not only by the aspect which it assumes or the language it employs when pleading for some relaxation of the law on its own behalf, but by their own experience of its spirit when they have had to seek the redress of their own grievances. The party which is so ready to cry out when the little finger of the law is laid upon any of its members had not a word of remonstrance when it pressed with the full weight of its loins upon unoffending Nonconformists. Throughout its whole history the voice of the High Church has always been for exclusiveness and intolerance. There have been no signs of change of spirit, no fruits meet for repentance in their action to-day. Most of them resented and resisted the concessions in the Burials Act with the same passionate determination which they showed in supporting the persecuting statutes of Charles II. But though they have established no claim on the sympathy of Nonconformists,

the latter would have forgotten their own wrongs and have given them hearty support if they could have seen that the High Church cause was the cause of justice and freedom. It is because they believe that the triumph of Clericalism would be adverse to both that they have turned a deaf ear to the appeals made to them in the name of liberty.

The appeal to Nonconformists might, indeed, well draw forth a response on the lines of the well-known retort addressed by one of a persecuted race to his persecutors, "Sirs, you have branded us as aliens and outcasts from the commonwealth of Israel. You not only thrust us out of the National Church, but you sought to debar us from the common privilege of serving God by means of Churches constituted on what we believe to be scriptural precedent and in a mode consistent with primitive simplicity. When we had conquered the right to exist, you still sought to burden existence with all kinds of social and political disability. You taxed us for the support of your worship; you refused us the right to educate our children in public schools and national universities; you denied us freedom to celebrate the marriages of our own people; you excluded us from public and municipal office. With all your love of liberty, you did nothing to secure us one of all these rights which belong to us as citizens and men. We conquered them for ourselves, and in every one of our struggles you have been our bitter opponents. Your conduct has been influenced not by individual sentiment but by the natural tendencies of an exclusive system. The faults of your fathers came down to you because that system remains the same through all the changes of the individuals by whom it is supported. One generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but the principle of "Catholic" exclusiveness

remaineth. If it is impossible that we accede to your demands, it is not because we resent the injustice of past times, but because we are opposed to the system of which that injustice was the natural product."

With the liberty of Ritualists to worship God according to their own conscience, and to persuade all whom they can influence to unite with them in their favourite ceremonies, no one has ever proposed to interfere, and had such interference been suggested, Nonconformists would not have been less strenuous in supporting the rights of conscience, because the system in whose defence they were claimed was one to which they were conscientiously opposed. But liberty to teach in the name of the nation, liberty to appropriate the sanctuaries of the national religion to the purposes of their own particular cult, liberty to build a fabric of priestly power on the foundations of national authority, and liberty to set aside the requirements of law in order to secure these ends, is another and a very different point. It is a liberty for which no Church has a right to ask, and which no State can grant without laying itself and the rights of its people at the feet of the priesthood.

XI.

The growing influence of Clericalism might have been contemplated without any anxiety had it not been for the aid which it derives from that theory of the comprehensiveness of the Establishment, which is nevertheless an abomination in its eyes. A certain section of the people have been beguiled into sympathy with it in its struggles on grounds which, were it true to its own convictions, it would indignantly repudiate. One of the

most specious and captivating pleas which has been urged in its favour is based upon the assumed rights of congregations to a choice of ritual. Such a suggestion, however, cuts the ground entirely from under the feet of men who refuse to alter a single feature in their ritual, either in deference to the wishes of their bishops or in obedience to the law of the land. Were this a mere matter of option with them, so that their chasubles might be assumed or doffed, and their candles lighted or extinguished at their own caprice, there could not be a shadow of an excuse for their absolute and even rebellious determination to carry out their own devices. On the showing of their advocates they must have placed themselves in a position of antagonism to all authority, disturbed the peace of the Church, and seriously interfered with their own usefulness for the sake of a mere fancy. Their own contention is that, as "Catholic" priests, they are bound to maintain the ritual of the "Catholic" Church. But if so, what becomes of the will of the congregation? It seems bad enough that men who advance such lofty claims, and who profess to be acting in obedience to a law of conscience from which there is no appeal, should nevertheless be content to remain in fellowship with a Church where that "Catholic" authority, which they maintain is supreme, is set aside by a large body of their fellow-clergy. But when they profess themselves to be prepared to waive their opinion in deference to the wishes of a congregation, as is implied in this plea of which they avail themselves, they expose their whole talk about conscience to mere ridicule and contempt.

They may indeed allege that this argument is not theirs but that of their friends; but if there should be

any intention of dealing with it seriously, it would certainly be necessary to understand to what extent they were prepared to accept its conditions. One of these Ritualist clergymen may at any time be appointed to succeed an Evangelical who has accustomed the people to the simplest form of Anglican service. In such case is the Ritualist clergyman prepared to accept the wishes of the congregation and maintain the old form of worship — Geneva gown in the pulpit and surplice at the altar—until in some way or other the people have been persuaded to approve the methods of a higher ecclesiasticism? If the answer be in the affirmative, what becomes of the supreme authority of the Catholic Church? If, on the contrary, it be said that conscience interposes a *non possumus*, where is the liberty of the congregation? If a clergyman is able thus to put his own scruples in abeyance in order to conciliate the feelings of a congregation, where is his justification for setting them up in defiance of his bishop? If his reverence for the "Catholic" Church is so profound that he is compelled to resist the authorized exponent of its will rather than set aside his private interpretation of its teachings, what can be the value of all this specious talk about congregational freedom? That some of those who indulge in it may be blind to the inconsistency of their own reasonings, and unable to understand that the very argument is an insult to the principles of the men on whose behalf it is urged, might be expected, but it certainly seems all but incredible that these champions of "Catholic" authority themselves should take advantage of a plea which in effect makes a mockery of all their pretensions.

Nor must it be forgotten either that congregational

freedom once admitted cannot possibly be one-sided. There is no reason why the use of an illegal garment should be tolerated, and the disuse of a legal one prohibited and punished. If some congregations desire an excess of form, there are others equally anxious to reduce the forms. If a service in spirit and in appearance, if not in actual language, corresponding to the Mass is to be allowed to one, why should the other be denied the gratification of its preferences for free prayer, and a service in which in general there is the conspicuous absence of everything ornate? It may be said that this is an extreme; but extremes are the best tests of a principle. How men who talk in the extravagant style of the High Church party as to the profanation of the Holy Sacrament could be content with an arrangement which would tolerate a more than Zwinglian simplicity, is a point certainly beyond the comprehension of those who have not been trained in the peculiar casuistry of the school. But on one point they may be satisfied. No pleadings for liberty on behalf of a school which through its whole history has been the consistent and often the unscrupulous opponent of liberty will be listened to by the English people, except on terms which will ensure an equal freedom to all. The toleration of doctrine has already been carried to a considerable extent; it will have to be carried still further, so that a man with opinions as far removed from the creeds of the Church as those of Mr. Stopford Brooke, and with a conscience as loyal to truth as his, will not feel that there is any reason why he should abandon his position in the National Church. And what happens in doctrine must occur in ritual also. If we are to have a priest robed in all the vestments of the Romish Church, the

same liberty must be conceded to those who hate not only the official robes of the clergy, but even a special clerical dress, and who would not hesitate to mount the pulpit without even the conventional white cravat, or even a black coat. The Act of Uniformity must be enforced, though not in a severe or pedantic, yet in a sufficiently decided style, or there must be absolute liberty. Liberty at the caprice of congregations, liberty to a particular school which happens to be fashionable, liberty to those who insist on having their own way or seceding from the Church if they cannot enjoy it, liberty with partiality and with hypocrisy, liberty to the lawless, the disobedient, and the transgressor, is one of the worst forms of tyranny.

But how arises this right to congregational liberty in an Established Church? There is perhaps too much talk of what is due to congregations in all communities. The theory of Congregationalism is that a gathered Church of Christ has an absolute right to manage its own affairs, owing responsibility to its Lord and its Lord alone. But it is a mere caricature of congregational principle to assert that a miscellaneous body of people, collected solely by their interest in a particular minister, and having no bond of union except their attachment to him, immediately acquire a right over the building in which they assemble, and the property which may be connected with it, to alienate it from the purposes for which it was intended, and appropriate it to others of a directly contrary character. A preacher who had himself forsaken even the essential truths of Christianity, and possibly even of Theism, might, by a gradual and quiet insinuation of his views, beginning with the systematic omission of all that is

most precious to a Christian Church, and only passing on by slow degrees to the enunciation of positive error, work out the old worshippers and fill their places by others of more sympathetic spirit, attracted both by his abilities and his views. Would it be deliberately contended that the congregation thus drawn together were the real possessors of the building? If so, to appoint a minister is to make him the absolute proprietor of the church or chapel in which he is to minister. Will Ritualists accept a theory of this kind in order to secure for themselves liberty in churches? or is it here as elsewhere that what they mean is simply liberty for themselves and tyranny over everyone besides? As has already been seen in the story of the early stages of this movement, a reference to congregations would have made very speedy work of Ritualist innovations.

It is only now, when a few congregations have been gradually led up to a sympathy with these Romanizing practices, that a plea is advanced for the rights of congregations by those whose own theory would make the congregations dependent entirely on the will of the priests. But this view of congregational liberty is contrary alike to the theory and the actual constitution of the Established Church. A State Church is to reflect the mind of the nation, not of little companies of people called congregations. If we are to recognize local opinion at all, it must be that of the diocese or parish. Everything in the Anglican Church rests upon this first principle. The title of the bishop expresses territorial authority. The boast of the Anglican has always been that his system makes provision not for individuals merely, but for districts called parishes. To introduce the will of the congregation

is to import an entirely new element hitherto never recognized, and having no appropriate place in such a system. But it is almost waste of strength to employ time in exposing the fallacies of a proposition which has not the slightest chance of being adopted, and the only plea for which is that without such a measure of comprehension the continuance of the Establishment is impossible.

It is admitted, of course, that no measure of this kind could be effectual, nor the liberty which it gives secured on terms which honourable men could accept, unless there were new legislation, and legislation which would affect the very foundations of the Establishment itself If once any proposal of the kind were made, and Parliament could be persuaded to try what could be done in the way of extending the life of the Establishment by widening its basis, it is not the Ritualist clergy alone to whom concessions must be made. An eminent member of the Broad Church has recently described the limits to which liberty ought to be extended; and the demands which he makes include the repeal of the Act of Uniformity, abolition of subscription, relegation of certain creeds to manuals of instruction, optional use of alternative forms in both sacramental services, optional omissions in other services, optional selection of prescribed lessons, additional qualifying and liberating rubrics, and that freedom of re-statement in the pulpit which would naturally follow these concessions. These are the kind of suggestions with which Parliament would have to deal, and it is pretty certain that they would find far more popular support than any proposal for the legalization of the vestments or an optional use of the Mass. That they would be carried in their integrity is more than improbable, but it is absolutely certain that

large concessions could not be made to one party and absolutely denied to another. The idea therefore of saving the Church from the secession of the Ritualists by means of a comprehensiveness for which new legislation would be necessary is one of the most hopeless that could possibly be entertained. Ritualists do not want comprehensiveness; their demand is either that the law of the "Catholic" Church shall be acknowledged in the Establishment, or that at all events, when it, as interpreted by them, comes into collision with the law of the land, they shall be at liberty to obey the former rather than the latter. That they would accept liberty by an Act of Parliament, be content with an optional use of the vestments where congregations desired them, on condition that they consented to an optional disuse of the Nicene or Athanasian creeds where congregations disliked them, and agree that the Church should have no voice at all in relation to the grand principles of faith, or rather, speak in a number of different and contradictory voices, provided that their own "Catholic" note should be heard amid the Babel, is to credit them with an amount of imbecility and an utter indifference to principle which certainly they have not deserved. The underlying thought in the whole is that they are a number of mere children who, if they can be gratified by being allowed to play at priest and Mass in certain churches of the country, will quietly put aside every principle for which they profess to be contending.

It must be admitted that the Dean of St. Paul's in his plea for liberty goes very far towards justifying such a suggestion.[1] Eloquent, striking, in some respects even touching, as the appeal is, it evades the real difficulty

[1] *The Nineteenth Century*, February, 1881.

by treating the question as affecting only the amount of toleration which must be granted to different forms of ritual. But that is not the essence of controversy at all. It is a mere accident; and if it be treated as the crucial difference, an entirely irrelevant issue is raised. The real question is not how the service should be conducted, but what the service is and what the character which attaches to the officiating priest. This is hardly a question which could be referred for settlement to individual congregations; and knowing that this is the real cause of conflict, it is worse than misleading to treat the world to platitudes about the progress of æsthetic sentiment and the propriety of leaving some opening for the changes and developments to which it must infallibly lead.

But this is the only way in which even the semblance of a hardship can be got up. Let it be once admitted that the indulgence asked is liberty to give in the Anglican service a scenic representation of the doctrine which the founders of the Anglican Church most strongly repudiated, and which has always been regarded as marking out the line of distinction between Rome and Lambeth, and the weakness of the Dean's plea becomes apparent.

His article is moderate in spirit, sympathetic in tone, forcible in argument, provided the true nature of the Established Church and the full extent of the liberty which he is asking be forgotten. He asks that the clergy in a Church established by law may be allowed to disobey the law, and that on a point which the whole history of the Church proves to be of cardinal importance. Nonconformists have found themselves unable to obey that law on points certainly of no higher moment, and they have had to put up with the disabili-

ties attaching to Nonconformity. Assuming for the moment that Ritualists are desirous of acting contrary to the law, it is not obvious why they should be spared the endurance of the same injustice. At all events, the only true remedy is the removal of all inequality, not the tolerance of disobedience to law on the part of those who are enjoying invidious privileges on condition of obedience. It is perfectly irrelevant to quote the wishes of congregations or to appeal to the consideration or indulgence of bishops, for congregations and bishops are alike bound to observe the law in a Church which the law has established. "The history of the last forty years," Dean Church tells us, "shows to what extent the feeling of congregations and families alters as to what is seemly and necessary for proper care and reverence in Divine service." Were all that was desired a style of service more in harmony with the spirit of the age, it might seem hard to press the law severely. Let it be openly maintained that, as during forty years Romish doctrines have spread, there should therefore be liberty for Romish ritual, and the whole aspect of the contention is changed. Indulgence is asked for disobedience intended to work out a revolution. The idea is more preposterous than the attempt of Irish Home Rulers to use the House of Commons for the purpose of bringing Parliament into contempt; for they did keep within the forms of law, while the Ritualists transgress them. They may dislike the present law, but that, though an excellent reason for seeking a change in the law, is no justification for any attempt to evade the law while it continues as it is. Such an idea, indeed, would hardly have been entertained but for the fixed idea of some independent rights as belonging to the Church, and a forgetfulness

of the fact that, under the present constitution in Church and State, the Church and the nation are identical, and that in all arrangements in relation to it the rights of its nonconforming as well as of its conforming members ought to be respected.

Any attempt to forecast the judgment of posterity upon the actors and incidents in the memorable chapter of Anglican Church history which opened with the publication of the Oxford Tracts would certainly be unsuccessful, and would not be attended by any practical advantage. We do not see the end of the struggle, still less are we able to estimate the ultimate influence of the principles of which the extreme High Church school have, during the last half-century, been such zealous propagandists, and on which some of their leaders have shed so much lustre by the beauty of their lives, the abundance of their labours, the ardour and eloquence of their advocacy, and the passionate intensity of their convictions. At present the battle seems to be in their favour. Their doctrines and practices have been hated, endured, pitied—with the exception of a few extreme points they are now all but embraced. At all events they seem to have won an established place for themselves in the Church. How much High Churchmen have had to sacrifice, and how much that must wound every "Catholic" susceptibility of their soul they have still to endure, in order to secure a toleration the very idea of which is an outrage upon their first principles, has already appeared. But at present there is no sign that they will so far have the courage of their convictions as to desert the Church unless it will submit to "Catholic" rule, and as little that they will be deprived of the liberty to indulge in "Catholic" practices

which they at present enjoy. Evangelicals and Erastians alike perceive that the Establishment cannot exist if High Churchmen, even of the extreme school, are expelled, and they accept the logic of necessity. Time only can show whether the Establishment will be saved; but for the present those who care more for the interests of vital godliness than for the contests of ecclesiastical parties, will mourn over the spread of a teaching the tendency of which, apart from the personal influence of some of its leaders, is to put the form in the place of the spirit, and to materialize the most spiritual doctrines and ordinances of the Christian religion.

LECTURE IX.

THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH AND THE FREE CHURCHES.

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THE relative position of the National Church and the Free Churches in this country is unique. In most of the European nations Dissent exists in one form or other; but Dissent at once so powerful, yet under a political and social ban so distinctly marked, so near the Established Church in points of doctrine and worship, whilst still kept so far apart solely on the ground of its nonconformity to the law of the national institution, is to be found nowhere beside. Nonconformity includes both Roman Catholic and Protestant Dissenters, and each of these sections may find within the privileged enclosure of the Established Church men who on all points, except that of their relation to the State, are much nearer to its members than to a large body of their fellow Churchmen. A High Anglican is further from a decided Protestant within his own Church than from a Roman Catholic priest ; while an Evangelical, or a Puritan of the old school, of whom a few are still left, has more religious sympathy with Protestant Dissenters than with the clergy who have recently engaged so much of the attention of the courts of law. Yet the line of demarcation which the State has drawn is

sufficient to keep apart those who, on the higher questions which belong to the spiritual essence of religion, are one, and who differ only in relation to the "material accidents" which belong to the Establishment.

The progress of the Free Churches during the century has made this ascendancy of one Church more patent and offensive than it was in times when Dissenters were so feeble a folk that they were forced to accept toleration, and even to be thankful that it was accorded to them. The very idea of Dissent as a lawful exercise of Christian liberty is of comparatively recent growth. First, there was the Catholic Church, which treated all variety of opinion as heresy that was to be suppressed, and that, even if it succeeded in attracting a certain number of adherents, was to be anathematized as a rebellion against Christ, and a breach in the unity of His body the Church. By the Reformation the National Church lost every pretension to this special distinction, and yet continued to put it forth with more arrogance than ever, and sought to cast upon Nonconformists the additional charge of disloyalty.

For a long time the contending parties engaged in a strife for supremacy, and each would have established a Church of its own pattern. Very slowly did the true theory of Christian freedom grow. A few small, despised, and persecuted communities began, in the days of Elizabeth, to revive the early form of the Christian society, by banding themselves together as Christians, and establishing a form of government entirely independent of State regulations. Their fundamental principle precluded them from aspiring to the position of a Church which was identified with the nation, and so long as such a Church existed, made them of necessity Dissenters. That there

have been cases in which those who held this principle have, when opportunity offered, been unfaithful to it does not affect the principle itself, which was the basis of Congregationalism and of Dissent in general, so far as it is the fruit of conviction, and not the result of adverse circumstances. English Nonconformity is the product of both. There are those who dissent because the State has established doctrines which they do not believe, and a form of government and worship they do not approve; and there are others who object to the idea of a State Church altogether. The first may be described as religious, the other as political Dissenters, but it is a distinction as to the grounds, not as to the motives of Dissent. Both may be equally religious in their dissent, but the one objects to the creed and ritual, and the other to the whole policy as well. The one complains of the State error which is endowed, the other may share the opinion that it is error, but he protests primarily against the State assuming to discriminate the truth and the error, and to exercise any patronage of religious opinion at all.

In this country the two classes are forced into a practical coalition, for there is not the most distant chance that any other Church will ever take the place of that which now enjoys the privileges arising out of connection with the State. The changes in the spirit and action of the clergy have already done much to force those Dissenters who believed in the expediency of a National Church, and were disposed to acquiesce in the continuance of the present state of things, into an attitude of more aggressive hostility. To some points in the constitution of the existing State Church they object, and, did opportunity offer, might probably desire to substitute a more scriptural system in its place. But if the

Anglican Church were generally represented by an Evangelical clergy, of true catholic temper, willing to live on terms of Christian fellowship with all other men, they would not have enrolled themselves among its active opponents, and might even have been its secret well-wishers in the strife.

The changes of the last thirty years—changes which have seriously affected the Evangelical party itself, and are likely to tell upon it far more severely in the future—have wrought a material alteration in the views of this class of Dissenters in relation to the Establishment. The Nonconformists of whom I speak are strong Protestants, and they cannot regard with complacency a Church among whose clergy there is an increasing disposition to minimize the Protestant element and, as far as possible, ignore all relations to Protestantism. There has risen up a party whose representatives find a pleasure in defiling the graves and traducing the memories of those founders of the Anglican Church whom Protestants of all Churches have hitherto held in highest honour; and these representations have so far affected the general sentiment of the Church that, with the exception of a noble but diminishing band, who remain as the memorials of a happier time, when there was a robustness in the Protestantism of the Evangelicals which is sadly lacking in their younger clergy, the names of the Reformers are quoted with reserve, and their deeds referred to with "bated breath and whispering humbleness." Sacerdotalism is in the air of the Establishment, and it is increasingly difficult to find a church and a ministry which meets the views of those who desire the faithful ministry of God's word and the reverent observance of His worship. The Church

has advanced Romeward in the character of the services in a large number of the parishes, but even more in the sentiment which pervades the whole. There is less of professed Protestantism, and what there is is emasculated and feeble.

If this degeneracy is marked even among Evangelicals, much more is it seen in that traditional Church-of-Englandism, which is always a powerful, indeed the most powerful, element in the Established Church. At one time it was High and Dry, more recently it yielded itself—partially at least—to a moderate Evangelicalism; it has become strongly sacerdotal. It is active, given to parochial labours, strongly æsthetic, prepared also to approve missions, but everywhere and in all kinds of work it is possessed with this "Catholic" spirit. The Oxford Convocation of to-day, where this element is dominant, as it has always been, would flout such resolutions as those which it passed in the case of Mr. Ward. The change in the spirit of the Church is complete and significant, and has been extensively leavened by the sacerdotal spirit.

It is to the Church as represented by the clergy that these observations principally apply. There is a section of the laity which is in full sympathy with such views; but it is more conspicuous for zeal and, in a few cases, for culture than for numbers. The gentlemen who are leaders of the English Church Union no more express the opinions of the classes of higher social position than does the Working Men's Association represent the views of the great body of English artizans. The day is pretty sure to come—if, indeed, it has not come already—when the "Catholic" party will have to reckon with a lay sentiment which holds the priest in the same scorn as did

our fathers even in the days when Rome was supreme. But for the present the clergy are the representatives of Church tendencies, and have been able hitherto to hold on their reactionary course with little or no check. One result has been to develope a Dissent which at one time was only a conscientious protest against some parts of the formularies into a decided opposition to the institution itself. Religious Dissent has become more political, not in the evil sense which its enemies love to attach to it, but in the sense of being more directly antagonistic to the present relations between the Church and the State. Men who were not troubled by the violation of equality are greatly disturbed at the thought that this wrong should be done in favour of a semi-Popery.

But while this cause has multiplied, and in all probability will multiply still more, the ranks of the enemies of the Establishment, the inspiration of the opposition to it, has doubtless been found in the belief that our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of His Church, and that the interference of human authority is a direct usurpation of His right as well as an invasion of the territory of conscience. The principle is as old as the gospel itself; but it had been so obscured, from the time of Constantine downwards, that on its revival in modern times it was treated as a wild extravagance of spiritual enthusiasts. Still it has slowly made its way and won adherents. History records not only the multiplication of Free Churches, but the steady growth in them of a spirit of liberty and independence. There is no reproach more frequently directed against the Nonconformists of the nineteenth century by Church defenders than that which is based on the dissimilarity of their views, especially on the

subject of State Churches, from that which was held by their seventeenth century fathers. The allegation is to some extent true; but so far from being esteemed a reproach by Nonconformists, they regard it as a glory. They have not accepted any theory which would arrest the progress of free inquiry at the end of the seventeenth or at any other century. They do not acknowledge any authority as interposing between them and the truth itself. Fathers, Reformers, Puritans, early Nonconformists are to them only interpreters of the Divine will by whom they have been instructed, and they claim the right to test all their interpretations by Scripture and by reason. They cannot believe that the experience of centuries is to be held of no value; that they are to be uninfluenced by the teachings of history and of science; that amid all all the progress of mind the one science which is to be stationary is theology, the one institution which is never to improve is to be the Church of Christ; and that they are bound to think to-day as men thought centuries ago. To reason thus would be to set Calvin or Baxter or Owen above Christ, or, at least, to assert that these men had a close relation to Christ which is not possible to the successors to their faith and principles to-day.

Especially in relation to these points of external polity was it to be expected that there would be difficulty on the part of men trained amid such different associations in grasping a truth to which their descendants now attach so much value. It was a forgotten idea, and it required no little strength of mind to recover and to trust in it. For centuries the Church had accepted the aid of the civil power, and had become so accustomed to depend on its help that it was not easy to accept the idea that the help had been not only unnecessary but

positively mischievous. That it had been employed in a wrong way, in behalf of error rather than of truth, to uphold superstition instead of ministering to freedom and purity, was very clearly perceived in those who were seeking to restore simplicity of Christian teaching and worship. But that was a reason why it should be brought under better influence, and did not justify the conclusion that so powerful an instrument should be dispensed with altogether. The reverence for the old Jewish economy, which was so strongly marked a feature in the Puritan teaching, told in the same direction by strengthening the desire for a national faith. Hence many of the early Nonconformists still clung to the idea of a State Church. Whether they would have preferred the Establishment as it is—with its perpetual bickerings and endless strifes, with its wrangling in Convocation and suits in courts of law, with bishops who have lost the power to rule, and clergy who have forgotten how to obey, with ministers who aspire to be sacrificing priests, and people who believe in mystic sacraments, with its contradictory voices and uncertain testimony—to no Establishment at all, is a point which it would not be easy to settle. This much may be said, they must have parted with their profound reverence for truth if they had been silent spectators of such an extraordinary crisis as the one through which we are passing. It may be added that they must have been very dull learners if such an experience as theirs had not enlarged and probably revolutionized their views on the question of national establishments of religion.

At all events, the true descendants of the seventeenth century Nonconformists are only showing how much they have inherited of the spirit of their fathers when

they follow their example by thinking and acting for themselves instead of being content simply to accept their opinions as binding and decisive. Men who broke loose from the traditions of centuries, and set themselves in opposition to the overwhelming mass of opinion in their own time, would have proved themselves strangely unfaithful to their own principles if they expected or desired to be the dictators of succeeding generations.

There certainly is every reason why the latter should not accept their rule. No authority could be pleaded on their behalf except that of the word of God, and that only so far as they asserted their own right of private interpretation in opposition to the consentient voice of all Christendom. They were strong only in the assertion of their liberty, and that liberty belongs equally to us. If they were not able at once to develope the full wealth of that land of freedom into which they had entered, that is no reason why their successors should put restraint upon themselves, and so forfeit the blessings they would otherwise enjoy. As well might men refuse to cultivate land left waste by lack of population or enterprize in former times. Fathers and children alike belong to the party of progress, and it is to be expected that every generation should be in advance of its predecessor. It would be absurd to suppose that Nonconformists of to-day should take the same views of ecclesiastical questions as men who were just emancipating themselves from the thraldom of centuries, or those of a later date, who were engaged in a fierce strife which neither allowed the opportunity nor fostered the spirit necessary for the calm investigation of first principles, or, later still, those who had been so cowed by defeat and persecution that they were ready to accept toleration

without asking whether justice would not warrant them in demanding something more, and flinging these petty gifts back to the givers with contempt. Time and circumstances are the great educators, and they have trained the overwhelming majority of the Churches, which are proud of their descent from the old Nonconformists, into a belief that a national establishment of religion is opposed to the constitution of the Church, that in this age it has become an anachronism, that in a free country like ours, with so many diversities of religious belief and Church rule, it is a gross injustice, and that, for the real good of the nation and for the real progress of the gospel, it is desirable that it should cease to exist.

II.

Here is the real contention between the Established and the Free Churches. All varieties of doctrinal opinion are ranged on both sides, and the question that divides is that of religious equality. Among Protestant Dissenters it may be confidently asserted that there is no considerable party, if indeed there be a party at all, which would seek the transfer of ecclesiastical supremacy from the Episcopal Church to another. If the struggle is made to assume a sectarian aspect, the fault certainly is with the defenders of existing systems. It is true that the developments of sacerdotalism may give greater keenness to the antagonism, cause the more abundant use of a particular class of arguments, possibly bring into the field a new body of opponents. But the most earnest and conscientious enemies of Ritualist aggression have no desire to repress it by establishing some form of Protestantism, or even by giving to the

present National Church a more distinctly Protestant character. There are few Nonconformists who would not regard such a proposal as utterly illusive and hopeless, even fewer who, if it were practicable, would not refuse to seek deliverance by such an expedient. They believe in the free conflict of opinions, and would leave Ritualism and Romanism, like all other "isms," to stand or fall in virtue of their capacity for winning the faith of men.

When, therefore, a lay defender of the Established Church attempts to make the right of Disestablishment depend upon one of the other Churches obtaining a numerical preponderance over the other, he mistakes or misrepresents the nature of the controversy. "If any one of the sects," says the Right Hon. J. G. Hubbard, member for the city of London, in *The Nineteenth Century* for January, "attained a larger following than the Church, it must by a general consensus supersede it as the expression of the religious profession of the country, and take its place in the Constitution; but, short of such transposition, the perpetuation of the monarchy involves the perpetuation of the National Church, with which it has been welded by statute with the special object of 'securing our religious laws and liberties.'" If this be the kind of reasoning which contents the mind of an eminent member of the Established Church, himself a Privy Councillor, it is not surprising that there should be such wide-spread confusion of thought in relation to this controversy. On one side only is it a struggle for sectarian advantage; on the other the aim is only to secure justice to all. Could it once be admitted that the nation ought to make some public profession of its faith, then would begin the

contest between the various Churches as to which was best fitted to interpret the mind and conscience of the people. Of course, under such conditions, no change could be made until some one Church was able to prove that it had a larger number of adherents than any other. But it is singular that any intelligent man could ever entertain the belief that the religious profession of a nation was to be determined by the mere counting of heads. On this theory, indeed, it is quite possible that the Church of a minority might secure for itself the sanction and authority of a national institution. It might be that one-half of the nation had no vital relation to any of the Churches, and that the other half was so generally divided amongst the several Christian bodies that the most numerous could have a minority even of the half among its adherents. Still, as it outnumbered any other single Church, it would have a right to the position of privilege.

As a matter of fact, the Established Church does not represent the belief of one-third of the people, and yet it is to be allowed to give "expression to the faith of the nation." But were the numbers of the favoured Church much greater, is this the ground on which any thoughtful man would be content to decide such a point? Numbers are not an unfailing test of truth, of righteousness, or of intelligence. To the uneducated masses appeal is made by means of rite and spectacle, and it may be that the appeal is successful. Is the Church which avowedly adopts these methods to be invested with special State privileges because of the number of adherents which it is thus able to secure? The preponderating weight of intelligence, the pre-eminence in goodness, that faith in liberty which is of such incalculable importance to the

interests of the nation, the superiority in spiritual and moral force in general, may be with some of the other Churches; are all these considerations to be sacrificed, and is the mere balance of numbers to determine everything? And is a Church which sets forth doctrines that are repellent to the intellect of the age and the country, and which insists on a servile submission to the priesthood inconsistent altogether with the spirit and rights of a free people, to be set up as the exponent of the national faith, solely because it has a larger following than any single Church beside, though that following may be composed chiefly of that section of the people who have not yet learned to think or understand as men, and are pleased with the childish things of symbol or of picture?

The theory is nothing better than an apotheosis of imbecility, childishness, and ignorance; but it serves to exhibit the straits to which Church defenders are driven when they attempt to deal with the present relative position of the Established and the Free Churches. It is only in so far as they help to illustrate the working of great principles, that the statistics which are so freely used on both sides, and which ingenious reasoners are able to present so as to make them supply an argument for their own cause, are of any real value. Of course, under a popular constitution, the majority must rule, and so long as a majority is content to support the present system of privilege, or is not prepared to take active measures for its abolition, it will hold its place. But it is the argument of force, not of right. Even then it is perfectly clear that if a majority of the people still professed to be members of the Established Church, that would give them no equitable title to impose their reli-

gion upon the dissentient majority. They can, of course, maintain the law as it stands, but might does not constitute right, though it is continually mistaken for it.

A dim consciousness of this seems to have been present to the mind of the champion of the Church, whose ire has been stirred by the opposition of Nonconformists to what he calls "a census of religions." He says, "Religious liberty with Churchmen of the present day is not a phrase, and they contend that whether Nonconformists were proved by a religious census to be fewer than a quarter, or more than half the population, they are equally entitled to the fullest measure of liberty of conscience, liberty of worship, and to personal equality before the law." It is only necessary to carry this one step farther to meet the Nonconformist view. Add to "personal equality" the equality of Churches, and this is the whole Nonconformist contention. The question is one of justice and principle, which is not affected by numbers. Of course, so long as numbers preponderate in favour of one particular view, it will be carried out, right or wrong; but though the verdict must stand, its justice may be disputed.

The advocates of religious equality have never insisted that it should be granted because of the number of Nonconformists in the nation. The relative proportions of Churchmen to Nonconformists are no doubt a very significant feature in the case, and one the force of which no enlightened statesman would deny. The question of right is the same, whether Dissenters form one-half or one-twentieth of the population, but a politician, though he himself believed in the justice and expediency of a State Church, might have a reasonable doubt as to its continuance in the former case, whereas he would

not trouble himself as to the opposition of a minority, as supposed in the latter. So far there is an argument in favour of Disestablishment from the increased number of Dissenters. On the showing of Erastians themselves, a National Church has forfeited its claims to its position when it has lost its nationality. But how can a Church be truly described as national when so large a part of the nation—whether a fraction more or a fraction less than one-half, is a point of very slight importance in such a comparison—has forsaken its fold, and sought a home in other Christian communities? Those who dream that they can meet such an argument by microscopic criticisms of Horace Mann's returns, only betray an incapacity for understanding the drift of the argument. If the numerical superiority of the Established Church has come to be so doubtful that there is a necessity for discussing every figure, and exhausting ingenuity in the interpretation of returns which seem adverse, *lis finita est.* Whatever else it be, a Church whose majority can be so easily disturbed by the mere accidents of weather cannot honestly be said to represent the nation.

As soon as the argument descends to the level to which those champions of the Established Church who insist so earnestly on the figures would unwisely reduce it, it becomes nothing more than a contention in favour of a privileged sect which would be repudiated by the ablest and most liberal defenders of the State Church almost as earnestly as by Dissenters themselves. There is something venerable in the claims of a Church to catholicity, and if it were possible to maintain so extraordinary an assumption, a right to authority and position might be supposed to accompany it. There is

also something attractive in the idea, of which Arnold was the most able exponent, of a complete identity between the Church and the State. But this appeal to a majority surrenders the sacred prerogative claimed on behalf of the Holy Catholic Church, and the nationality assumed by the Erastians as the basis of their theory, and rests everything on a mere numerical test. The underlying idea is that of a scramble for place and power among the various sects, the prize remaining with the one which can point to the largest number of nominal professors. A census of religious profession was, therefore, loudly demanded in order that the force of the Established Church might be displayed and the continuance of its privileges vindicated by a parade of its superiority to Wesleyans or Congregationalists or any other body of religionists, as shown in the greater number, not of actual worshippers, but of those who call themselves churchmen. It may be that such a display would have produced an impression on a certain section of the people, but it would have been of no permanent advantage to the cause it was intended to promote. When this controversy about a great principle is brought down to a mere rivalry of sects, and that rivalry itself confined to a mere comparison of nominal adherents, who may never enter the walls of the church to which they profess to belong, it is not difficult to see that the doom of the Establishment will be sealed, and the end will not be far distant.

There is yet one other point in connection with the proposal for a religious census whose real significance these Church defenders seem never to have been able to perceive. Their dependence is upon the large numbers who have neither vital nor visible relation to any re-

ligious denomination whatever, but who, it is hoped, might, if asked to declare their religious preference, pronounce in favour of the National Church. "If," says Mr. Hubbard, "masses of the people choose to describe their religious profession as that of the Church of England, it would be the height of tyranny to preclude their doing so." But no one would desire to grudge them so innocent a gratification, or even to deprive the Church of any advantage which it might derive from the addition of a mixed multitude, who would add as much to its real strength as the prefixing of a number of ciphers to the value of a figure. The only objection of Nonconformists is to the "tyranny" of dictating a faith to them and to the nation by means of adherents whose attachment to the Church is sufficiently expressed by describing themselves to the official enumerator as Churchmen. A right sentiment would surely have led a Church defender to keep this element in the background. It is bad enough to have to confess that one-half of the religious people do not belong to the National Church. It is infinitely worse to be forced to admit that almost a moiety of the population, for all practical purposes, belongs to no Church at all. With an innocence which attains almost to the point of sublimity, Mr. Hubbard writes: "This assumption demands most careful scrutiny, seeing that Mr. Mann's figures include only 7,261,032, and that the population was 18,000,000. How are the ten millions and more who were not at church or chapel on Census Sunday to be dealt with? Are they to be scored off as of no religion, or be apportioned by the simple operation of a rule-of-three amongst the one hundred and odd denominations tabulated by Mr. Mann? Neither course would be satisfac-

tory. There must be many thousands of those who did not worship publicly on Census Sunday who would still be quite prepared to declare their religious profession; while again, an arithmetical distribution of the non-worshippers would yield a most fallacious impression of the convictions or preferences personally entertained." But surely these ten millions are the reproach, and more than the reproach, of the Establishment. That there should be this vast number of people in Christian England who do not maintain even an outward show of reverence for Christianity must be a source of bitter sorrow and even self-humiliation to all Churches; but to the National Church, which has undertaken the responsibility for their religious teaching and culture, to which have been assigned such large funds for the purpose of carrying on the work, and which enjoys so many privileges in virtue of its having accepted this trust, it is nothing short of a scandal. That these voluntary aliens from all our churches should be paraded as adherents of the Established Church is only to presume upon the weak acquiescence of some who are moved by a mere array of figures without pausing to inquire what is their true significance. Nonconformists will not quietly accept such an argument. They are quite content that the ten millions should be introduced into the consideration, but they cannot see to what other use they can be put, except to demonstrate the egregious failure of the public Church system.

III.

The history, in truth, of the present century is one record of the continuous aggressions of the spirit of liberty and equality upon this old principle of ecclesias-

tical ascendancy. The ground which the State Church once occupied has been gradually narrowed until every outlying fort has successively been taken, and the territory of the Establishment is restricted to the little piece of land on which the citadel stands. Its claim to be the sole Church of the nation was lost before the beginning of the eighteenth century, but for nearly a century and a half after the Toleration Act nothing was done towards enlarging the liberties of Dissenters, and a long chain of forts extending round the central tower seemed to defy the attacks of any assailants. Exclusive civil privilege was first challenged, and was overthrown by the Test and Corporation Acts, the repeal of which is associated with a man whose name ought ever to be dear to the friends of civil and religious liberty, the late Earl Russell. The ecclesiastical monopoly in the celebration of marriages, one of the most needless and offensive badges of sectarian inferiority which Dissenters had to endure, was the next wrong that was redressed. Then came the abolition of the right of the Establishment to tax the community for the maintenance of national fabrics of which it still retained the exclusive use. The admission of Nonconformists to the national seats of learning from which they had so long been debarred, alike to their own injury and that of the nation, and the gradual removal of the distinctions between Churchmen and Dissenters at the universities, not yet carried to the ultimate point of complete abolition, was the next triumph of the great principle of religious equality. It was the emancipation of mind, as previous victories had accomplished the emancipation of property, and political privilege and religious right, from the unjust dominion of a sect. The latest and greatest triumph, so far as

English Nonconformity is concerned, has been the admission of their services in the graveyards attached to the parish churches, hitherto regarded as the mere appanage of a sect, but now authoritatively recognized by law as the property of the nation. Dissenters' grievances, which once were a formidable array, and for the abolition of which so many societies were formed and so many agitations organized, have thus been all but swept away, and the only contest which remains to be fought has relation to the existence of an Established Church at all.

The principle of the State Church has been still further materially weakened by the abolition of the Irish Establishment. It is true that this was not meant to be a recognition of the abstract principle of religious equality, but it was distinctly based on the principle that a Church which does not command the allegiance of the nation has forfeited its claims to be the National Church. How seriously this tells upon the position of the English Establishment is evident from the consideration of the fact which has just passed under our notice, that it can only make a colourable show of being the Church of a majority of the people by reckoning amongst its adherents multitudes who never enter its sanctuaries, and never seek the ministrations of its clergy except at marriage and burial. Further, so far has the idea of nationality been abandoned, that no attempt is now made to secure a national provision for the religious necessities of a population, the numbers of which are not only being incessantly multiplied, but their local distribution so entirely altered that an imperative necessity exists for the adoption of new methods and the employment of fresh agencies. With a wise under-

standing of the signs of the times, a sincere faith in their own religious principles, which is the best proof of vitality, and an exhibition of generous liberality, from which all Churches may well take example, the members of the Anglican Church have sought to adapt it to these changed conditions. Its advocates point with justifiable pride to the buildings that have been erected, to the funds that have been provided, to the multiplication of bishops and clergy for the great work of the times. This remarkable progress is the best evidence that as a Church system Anglicanism is not dying, and it is unquestionably one of the most memorable facts of the period. But it is due to the earnestness of a faith, not to the worldly wisdom of Erastianism. It is the product not of the State Church, but of the voluntary principle. The parochial system, once the boast of the Anglican Church, has utterly collapsed, and its deficiencies have been repaired not by the State, but by the holy zeal of Christians who belong to the National Church. Nor has this extraordinary revival been without its difficulties to the Establishment, within whose confines and under whose shadow it has been developed.

The internal troubles of the hour are very largely due to the fact that those whose personal devotion has contributed so much to the progress of the Church are not content to leave its government in the hands of a State which has neglected what it assumed to be its duty, and devolved so much of its responsibility upon them. With calls upon the liberality of congregations has come the demand for congregational freedom. The position is so anomalous that numbers are unable to recognize its embarrassments. They have argued and they have worked for a Church one of whose chief

recommendations to them is that it is the Church of the nation. They seem unable as yet to understand that while the State may accept from its members much in the way both of contribution and of effort, it is impossible that it can, even for the sake of these, sacrifice its own absolute control over a Church which still retains the name, and enjoys the prestige of a great national institution. The nearest parallel in the case of any of our other establishments is that of the Volunteers, and there the State has the entire command of the forces which individual patriotism has placed at its disposal; but religious principles and feelings, where they are of any root and depth at all, are not so amenable to influence as are the varied sentiments which may induce men to offer a military service to their country. In the latter case, the country itself is the object of devotion, and the feeling which induces a man to offer his sword in its defence prompts him also to submit to the discipline which its authorities find it necessary to impose. But the root of this wondrous development of Church life is in a sense of duty to God, which involves an antecedent and higher obligation. This is the real explanation of what at first sight seems a paradox, that the prosperity of the Church may mean the weakening of the Establishment, and that the more intense the life of the one, the more certain will be the death of the other.

IV.

It is not wonderful that those who have enjoyed supremacy so long that they have learned to esteem it an indefeasible right, should be very slow to recognize that the sceptre is departing from them. But they will

assuredly do their own cause no service by engaging in these statistical battles. If the maintenance of an Established Church is to be vindicated, it can only be by a proof that the institution is of such benefit to the nation, that it is right to secure the good even at the cost of State justice to certain sections of the community. Seeing that Nonconformity includes so considerable a portion of those who are interested in the religious work of the nation, and that the injustice from which they suffer means a direct curtailment of their privileges as citizens —in one sense, relegation to an inferior national position—there certainly ought to be some very distinct evidence as to the counterbalancing good to induce them to submit to the indignity thus inflicted. To describe a man as a Dissenter is to inflict a certain ban upon him. It may not carry with it any appreciable loss, but it does unquestionably mark a position of social inferiority. The sacrifice is one which any true man would be ready to make for "conscience' sake," and, in fact, he might regard it as infinitely little when accepted as a cross which he has to bear because of his loyalty to the Master and the truth. But there is no reason why he, a free man in a free State in which he has a real stake, and for which he feels as patriotic a devotion as any of the favoured class, should be content with this inequality, unless it be necessary for the sake of some higher ends, the consideration of which leads him to put aside all personal feeling.

To him, at all events, it does not appear a part of the eternal order of things that one class of Christians should be separated from all beside, not in virtue of their higher attainments, not because of the greater abundance of their good works, but solely because of the favour with

which the State regards them. If they are distinguished by these other qualities, honour will accrue to them accordingly. Eminent piety needs no hall-mark from the State to accredit it, for no good man would grudge it the tribute of veneration which is its due. The stoutest champion of religious equality, if he have spiritual principles of his own, will cheerfully recognize and admire whatever is beautiful and noble in the story of the Anglican Church. That would be a miserable bigotry which could not respond to the devout utterances of pure hearts, or be stirred by the noble heroism of godly men who have braved the scorn or violence of the world for Christ, because they were members of another Church, and that would be the most unworthy of all competitions in which the saints of different Churches were matched against each other in order to work out some argument on behalf of an ecclesiastical system. Nonconformists have no idea of engaging in such a strife. "They dare not make themselves of the number, or compare themselves with those who commend themselves." To intellectual, moral, and spiritual superiority, they would always do reverence, desiring only to derive from it the example and stimulus to good works. The illustrious men of the Anglican Church have no more hearty or appreciative admirers. The inequalities of nature and grace we meekly accept, the inequalities of culture we regret, the inequalities of holy Christian service we will, with God's blessing, seek to redress; but against the inequalities which the State creates we protest as unrighteous, as contrary to the law of Christ, and as hindrances to the spread of His kingdom.

Even with those who have not grasped the abstract

idea that all State establishments of religion are contrary to the principles of the gospel, and who are disposed to believe that the question of their existence ought to be decided mainly on the grounds of expediency, the present condition of the Anglican Church may well constitute an argument in favour of disestablishment. If the continuance of a condition of things which involves the supremacy of one class of religionists, and consequent injustice to all others, is to be justified, then it must be by some very strong evidence, showing that the institution secures some great good that could not otherwise be attained. It has at various times been contended that an Establishment is necessary in a Christian country as a witness to the faith of the gospel—in a Protestant country like ours as a defence against the aggressions of Rome. Reversing their order, let us consider the two pleas successively. The "Catholic" development has with all unprejudiced people disposed of the argument that the Establishment is a safeguard against Romanism. In face of the fact that the Papacy has renewed its strength by means of converts drawn almost entirely from the Established Church, and including not a few of its clergy, it requires no small hardihood to speak of it now as a bulwark of Protestantism. Still there is a sense in which it may be accepted as having in it a modicum of truth. It may be that in the charmed circles of society there are some so full of the spirit of authority, so ready to bow down to the idols of tradition and antiquity, so enamoured of title and pomp that, if there were no State Church, they would prefer the Romish communion to that of any form of Protestantism. What Protestantism gains by such nominal adherents is not very manifest. Their influence in the Church is

much more likely to restrain the utterance of a bold and manly testimony to Protestantism than to contribute to the advancement of vital godliness. The Anglican Church itself might easily gain more in the removal of an incubus than it would lose in numbers or status by the withdrawal of men who have in them nothing of the Protestant, if indeed they have anything of the Christian, spirit.

In no way can it truly be said that the Establishment ministers to the defence of Protestantism. We are sometimes told, indeed, that were the Establishment to perish the Church of Rome would be the residuary legatee. The prediction may alarm some timid souls, but ought not to move any one whose Protestantism has its roots in simple faith in God. All these anxieties and apprehensions, of which the friends of the State Church make so much capital, only show how many Protestants there are who have yet to learn what be the first principles of the system for which they profess such earnest zeal—nay, how many Christians who need to renew their faith in the living God! Protestantism means the freedom of mind and conscience, and trusts for its success to the power of truth alone. To confess that it could not resist the attack of Romanism and priestcraft unless it were defended by the buttresses of law is only to acknowledge its inherent weakness.

Still it must be acknowledged that so inveterate are the prejudices of numbers in favour of some external support for the truth, or so weak their faith in the truth itself, that their belief in State defences of Protestantism has been destroyed, not so much by the proof of its inherent fallacy as by the demonstration supplied by the story of recent years, that the Establishment is much

more likely to promote than to hinder the growth of Romanism in this country. There was a time when the Evangelical party, in the flush of their early zeal, in their simple devotion to the preaching of the gospel, in their readiness to co-operate in Christian work with Protestant Dissenters, and in the boldness of their testimony against the Papacy, not only attracted considerable sympathy to themselves, but exercised a restraining influence upon many Nonconformists who were unwilling to countenance aggressive action against the Establishment, lest it might disturb the position and weaken the influence of those whom they regarded as their friends. That time is past. Not only, as has been abundantly evident in the course of these lectures, has another party acquired influence, but the spirit of the Evangelicals themselves has changed.

The cause of the decline of Evangelicalism is certainly not to be found in any abatement of that Protestant feeling of which the Evangelicals claim to be the special exponents. The extent to which the "Catholic" teachings have affected the tone and character of the Established Church has been already pointed out. That there is a party active, socially influential, full of spirit and energy, with boundless audacity and unfailing self-confidence, bent on completing the work of Catholic reaction, is not to be questioned. But it is very easy to exaggerate its numbers, and still more so to overrate its actual influence upon the public opinion of the Church or of the nation. It is not to be learned from a mere reckoning of the numbers to be found in Ritualist churches, attracted, in some cases, by the sensational character of the ceremonial, in others, by the popularity and power of some

gifted preacher rather than by any vital sympathy with the principles inculcated. The latter class is the only strength of the party, and it is hard to determine what proportions it bears to the whole.

Very little deduction, however, can fairly be made for those who may have æsthetic tastes strongly developed, although they have no Romanizing tendencies. The drift from Protestant freedom and simplicity may begin in the one, but it passes very rapidly and almost imperceptibly into the other, in a Church whose formularies are so strongly leavened with sacramentarianism. It may be assumed, therefore, that a large majority of those who start by a recoil from what they call "slovenliness and irreverence," but what might often more truly be described as simplicity and purity, and content themselves, at first, with some musical improvements or floral decorations, will, under the guidance of an earnest priest, be found ere long accepting the principles of a sacerdotal system.

In order to an intelligent conception of the real tendency of this æsthetic movement, it must be remembered that the taste for ornament and effect is not one which is indiscriminately indulged in relation to all parts of the Church and the service. On the contrary, there is generally a studied contrast between the plainness of the body of the Church and the elaborate splendour of the altar. It is on the altar that all the skill of art is employed, and all the splendid generosity of pious hearts lavished, all the ready industry of deft and willing fingers expended. The altar and the priest who minister at it are kept perpetually and prominently before the mind and heart of the worshippers, and gradually a superstitious reverence

is begotten for them. Æsthetics are made to subserve the purpose of theology, and they who began by the cultivation of what they regarded as a more devotional or beautiful style of worship end by becoming zealots for these so-called "Catholic" doctrines and practices.

But, while recognizing these facts in their fullest significance, it would be a great mistake to suppose that Ritualist views have made such an impression, even within the Anglican Church, as seriously to undermine the Protestant feeling of the nation. *The Times* cannot be quoted on any subject as an infallible authority, but its writers must occasionally know something of the general tendencies of thought. That journal has recently made a very remarkable statement, which may possibly be subject to considerable discount, but would scarcely have been propounded in so positive a form if there had not been a substratum of truth. Pointing out the probable results of the concession of congregational freedom, in matters of ritual, it says,[1] "It will soon become incumbent on every clergyman to show why he wears the surplice, when it is now optional. For one thousand, if so many, in chasubles and what not, there will be five thousand performing the whole of the Divine service in the costume of an English gentleman. The supposition of the proposed policy is that it is best to consult the wishes of the congregations, and that congregations have different tastes. There certainly are five thousand congregations in the existing pale of the Church of England who see nothing in the surplice but an old-fashioned piece of propriety, and a badge of uniformity not without its dangers. They would see it dropped. This would not be the last chapter of the story. It would

[1] *The Times*, February 10, 1881.

rather be the first chapter of a 'second Reformation.'" The conclusion from this is that, putting out of consideration the central body of safe and correct Churchmen, who desire nothing more than the continuance of the present order, the lovers of an extreme simplicity outnumber the aspirants after a gorgeous and sacerdotal ritual in the proportion of five to one. This is an important testimony coming from one who has extended opportunities of observation as to a point which has caused anxiety to many minds, the soundness of the Protestant instincts of the people.

But though this is so, earnest Protestants do not enrol themselves in the Evangelical party, to which they might be supposed naturally to incline. There are numbers who are themselves decided and strenuous opponents of Ritualism in every form, who are nevertheless determined to keep themselves clear of all complication with the special antagonism of the Church Association, and even express their distinct condemnation of its procedure. They dread any advance Romeward, but they would not give any countenance to the pretensions of the Evangelical school. In truth, they dislike Evangelicals only one degree less than they do Ritualists. With the exception of the Bishop of Liverpool (and the extent to which he has yielded to the High Church influences is a surprise to all who are familiar with his "Home Truths" and compare them with some of the utterances at Church Congresses) there is hardly a popular Church leader, either on the Episcopal Bench or among the inferior clergy, who is identified with the Evangelical party. The Primate and the Bishops of Manchester and Oxford are among the most popular of the prelates; two eminent canons have

recently been dividing the attention of the metropolis by their eloquent outbursts in as direct antagonism as the orations of Demosthenes and Æschines; two popular preachers, Mr. Knox Little and Mr. Body, perhaps attract larger audiences, and exercise a greater power over them, than any other preachers not on the Episcopal bench. Not one of all these is an Evangelical. Indeed, excepting the Primate, there is not one of these whom Evangelicals do not regard with deep distrust, if not with a more hostile feeling.

The most popular of Anglican clergymen, beyond all controversy, is the amiable, accomplished, and liberal Dean of Westminster. Those who dissent most widely both from his theological and ecclesiastical positions cannot but often wish that those with whose principles they are in closer sympathy had more of that beautiful spirit which has secured for Dean Stanley such unrivalled popularity. An Evangelical leader with his breadth of view, his many-sidedness, his abounding, sometimes no doubt superabounding, charity, his keen sense of justice, his sympathy with all the currents of modern thought, and his varied culture, would have commanded a power in this nation before which Tractarianism would have quailed. The Dean of Westminster has always upheld the principles of Protestantism in its true and broad sense, has upheld them when he stood almost alone in the Convocation, and has dissected with merciless severity the pretensions of that ecclesiasticism on behalf of which he has nevertheless always pleaded for toleration. But he is not an Evangelical. He is not even one of those who adhere in all essential points to the Evangelical theology, though they do not ally themselves with the school and have a strong antipathy to its peculiar "isms."

That the intellectual, and to a considerable extent the spiritual, force of Protestantism—even that which belongs to the Established Church—has gone away from the Evangelicals is unquestionable. Something is due to the special features of the theology they have maintained, but even more to the spirit they have manifested. Their distinctive theology is, in its exposition and defence, strongly Calvinistic, and in not a few cases deeply tinged with Millenarianism. The age has gone away from this type of doctrine, but it has still more decidedly rebelled against the disposition to insist on its peculiar tenets as if they were of the essence of the gospel. The spirit of liberty which is abroad would teach men to leave those whose stereotyped theological theories are unaffected by any of the discoveries of science or the movements of modern philosophic inquiry to enjoy their views in peace. But when their notions are propounded as though they were the truth, and when those who dispute them even in the slightest particular are treated as though they had denied the faith, prejudice is awakened not only against the teachers, but also against the system which they seek to enforce upon the belief of men. There may be a popery associated with the most extreme Protestantism, and nowhere is its dogmatism more offensive and its intolerance more certain to provoke embittered resistance. Wherever men draw a cordon round their own company as though it were the Church of Christ, identify their interpretations of the gospel with the gospel itself, attribute a virtual infallibility to their creed, and constitute themselves its infallible interpreter, there is the spirit of popery. It is the exhibition of this narrowness on the part of some of the representatives of the Evangelical school which has

done so much to alienate from it the sympathies of a pronounced and liberal Protestantism. Very probably the Evangelicals, on their part, would console themselves with the thought that those who condemn them only prove their own disloyalty to the faith ; but in doing so they would only furnish another illustration of the righteousness of the judgment passed upon them. There are true and godly men who worship Christ their Divine Lord with a reverence as deep and a devotion as pure as that of any Evangelical, but who are not prepared to submit themselves to the rule of the hard theology on which the school insists. These men are as impatient under the anathemas of Evangelicals as under those of the Pope himself, and they are unable to discern any advantage in the substitution of the one for the other. They assert the right of private judgment equally against both, and resent the accusations either of a faltering loyalty to the Saviour or of a tendency to Ritualism launched against them by these Protestant censors, because, forsooth, they have not reached the same conclusions as themselves.

This tendency to fight Romanism with its own weapons has always been the weakness of the party. They have sought to set authority against authority, and have forgotten that the first principle of Protestantism is the rejection of all human authority in matters of faith. Even their contention against Rome, therefore, has not been of an intelligent and manly character. They have too frequently traded upon prejudice instead of appealing to principle. They have seen popery in innovations which are harmless, and failed to detect and oppose its subtle and more dangerous forms of working. They have even been guilty of the miserable

inconsistency of seeking to suppress it by force, and have been the strenuous advocates of the penal disabilities which were so long imposed upon its professors. Everywhere they have been afraid of that liberty in which Protestantism must live and move and have its being. They have not yielded to their own principles an unhesitating loyalty, nor have they shown themselves able to trust them with their whole heart. If truth be told, Protestantism owes but little to these champions. They have carried into its defence other ideas which are utterly inconsistent with its own teachings, and they have thus disqualified themselves for effective service.

Dr. Arnold said with some keenness but, unfortunately, with too much truth: "The Evangelicals, by their ignorance and narrow-mindedness, and their seeming wish to keep the Church and the world ever distinct instead of labouring to destroy the one by increasing the influence of the other, and making the kingdoms of the world indeed the kingdoms of Christ,"[1] served to keep away many who would otherwise have been gathered into the Church. Again, in the preface to a MS. volume of sermons in 1829: "Their peculiarities as a party seem to me to arise simply from these causes. A good Christian with a low understanding, a bad education, and ignorance of the world, becomes an Evangelical; whilst, on the other hand, if you were to enlarge the understanding of an Evangelical, if you could remedy the defects of the education, and supply him with abundant knowledge of men and things, he would then become the most complete specimen of a true Christian."[2] In the intervening period a larger number of the class described in these closing words—men of high culture

[1] Arnold's *Life*, p. 70.

[2] Ibid. p. 221, n.

and true genius—have been brought under the influence of the Evangelical faith; but the result has been that they have separated themselves from the party, which has lost strength despite the spread of its vital principles. Its influence has certainly not been augmented by the anxiety shown by some of its leaders to conciliate the High Church party. The world has seen in these too unctuous overtures a confession of weakness and even a betrayal of principle, a tacit acknowledgment that Evangelicals feel their position insecure, and an unworthy desire to unite the forces of the two powerful centres for the suppression of the extreme. A party which has honeyed compliments for High Churchmen, with all their sacerdotal tendencies, and only averted looks and harsh censures for Nonconformists whose love of the spirituality of Christ's kingdom stirs them to resist Erastian encroachments upon their Lord's prerogative, is not the party to give the Establishment a true Protestant character.

Cardinal Newman called the party Puritan, but if it is to be thus designated, it must rather be because of the lack of a more appropriate title than of the special suitability of a name which is identified not merely with a narrow theology, but with broad conceptions of political liberty and manly earnestness in its defence. Puritanism of the days when Puritans were heroes did not shrink from the stern conflicts of the world. Its very asceticism, which has often been unduly exaggerated, was not the product of a maudlin sentimentalism or of a false theory as to the nature of the world itself, but to a conviction of the necessity for a resolute struggle against the allurements of evil which had penetrated the souls and governed the lives of its professors. It may some-

times have been pushed to excess, but it was at all events at least due to a belief that days of tribulation and conflict could not be the time for mere idle dalliance or easy luxury. The Evangelical party, so far as it has reproduced Puritanism at all, has reproduced its sterner, less attractive, less reasonable, and less noble side. It retains restrictions when such reason for them as may at one time have existed has passed away; and while vehement in its denunciations of the world, as the world is technically understood, has yielded to the spirit of the world to an extent of which perhaps it is but little conscious. As Newman said, "to call it Puritan would be to lose sight of its Establishment side." Erastianism is in its very essence worldliness, and Erastianism has laid its fatal spell upon the Evangelicals. There is a curious picture which Newman draws of a service at St. Mary's, Oxford, which very forcibly illustrates the spirit which has gone so far to enfeeble the testimony of the Evangelical party. He is describing the bidding prayer. "'Presently he brought out,' continued Sheffield, assuming a pompous and up-and-down tone, "especially for that pure and apostolic branch of it *established*"—here the man rose on his toes—"*established* in these dominions." Next came, "for our Sovereign Lady Victoria, Queen, Defender of the Faith, in all causes and over all persons, ecclesiastical as well as civil, within these her dominions *supreme*"—an awful pause, with an audible fall of the sermon-case on the cushion, as though nature did not contain, as if the human mind could not sustain, a bigger thought.'" Whether the preacher, thus overwhelmed by the thought of that great power by which his Church was established, was an Evangelical does not appear, but the spirit is too

much that of the Evangelical party. This dependence on the arm of man is certainly not Puritan, but it is Evangelical, and its fatal influence may be traced through all the recent history of the party. It has restrained their testimony when that ought to have been specially bold and unflinching; it has caused their resistance to the aggressions of Tractarianism to be shallow in principle, vacillating in purpose, and ineffective in action. It has made them shrink back with nervous apprehension whenever it seemed possible that the bold action which was imperatively demanded might possibly deprive them of the aid of the State, and leave them to depend solely on the arm of God. Beyond any other cause it has ruined the prospects of a party which once was great, and might have been irresistible, by taking from it that power of soul in which its strength lay. If the people of England have been lost to the Evangelical party, it is because that party was first untrue to itself.

In short, the Evangelical plea for the retention of the Establishment is silenced by the utter failure of the party to baffle or even seriously to check the advances of the Romanizing party. The crucial fact which must strike any thoughtful observer in looking at the Anglican Church, is that the main object for which the Oxford divines contended has been accomplished. Their aim was to assimilate the Church to the model of Laud; and were Laud Archbishop of Canterbury to-day, he would find himself able to accomplish almost everything for which he struggled, except the right of harrying Nonconformists. What power he would be able to wield over recalcitrant clergy in his own Church is doubtful, though it may be questioned whether Laud would allow himself to be baffled even in these

liberal days by disloyal and rebellious priests, after the fashion in which our modern prelates are forced to tolerate the contempt put upon their authority. But Laud himself could have desired no more extreme assertion of "Catholic" doctrine, and no higher development of "Catholic" ritual, than that to which England is becoming so accustomed that it has almost ceased to startle or to shock. He insisted on the authority of the Church as absolute and supreme: it is proclaimed to-day with a confidence and pretension which would have gratified his utmost desires. Laud maintained the authority of tradition, and Rome itself does not give tradition a higher place than that which is now ascribed to it in the Anglican Church, for though there is difference as to the traditions to be accepted, there is none as to the reverence shown to those whose claims are acknowledged. Laud exalted the priest and the sacrament, and in this modern school sacramental grace is set forth as one of the distinguishing tenets of the Church, and the priest is glorified as its centre and depository. The ambition of Laud was to have the Anglican ritual as full of pomp and circumstance and impressiveness as that of Rome itself, and his idea is realized in hundreds of Anglican Churches with a fulness exceeding his wildest hopes. In short, Laud's ideas as to the supremacy of the Church, the exclusiveness and sanctity of the priesthood, the mystic value of the sacrament and the splendour of the ritual, are carried out to-day to an extent on which Laud himself hardly seems to have ventured, and to which there has been no complete parallel since the Reformation.

One circumstance has prevented a fuller realization of the ideal of Laud. His opposition to Rome was

simply an opposition to the supremacy of the Pope. It was Geneva that he hated, and he cared for Rome only in so far as it interfered with his own ambition. Under his influence Canterbury would have become a Cismontane Rome, while he himself would have had a supremacy and infallibility equal to anything that is claimed for the successor of St. Peter. Happily for the nation, perhaps happily for themselves, our English Romanizers have not yet found any member of the hierarchy so insensible to the real tendencies of public opinion as to share Laud's ambition and to prosecute Laud's aims. In every other respect there has been a revival of the attempt which did more than anything else to bring on the Civil War. The great difference between the two periods is that the movement which failed in the seventeenth has succeeded in the nineteenth century.

The Ritualists are perfectly true in their boast that they have adherents amongst all classes, though certainly not distributed with anything like equality. Taken altogether, their number is not so great as they would fain have the world believe; but, such as they are, they are distributed with more or less equality among various sections of the laity. They are strongest in the two extremes of society. They have an influence over the romantic, the æsthetic, and the sentimental; they attract a certain number of those who are hanging on the outskirts of society, and are desirous to be in the fashion in religion as in everything else. And they have sought, though with less success, to make an impression on the more sober and thoughtful middle class. The results in the latter case are, as might be expected, extremely limited, and would be even more so but for the extra-

ordinary infatuation with which liberalism of a certain type resolutely determines to look only at externals, without thinking of principles or the issues to which they tend. All the support which has been received from this latter class would speedily vanish if the episcopate was bent on carrying out the ideas of the Ritualist party.

The sobriety of the bench of bishops has in truth been the safeguard of Ritualism; it has received a contemptuous toleration where otherwise it would have found an overwhelming and destructive resistance. Perhaps the best thing which could happen to the Protestantism of this country would be the appointment of a bishop who should carry out, on the Ritualist side, a policy as decided as that which the late Bishop of Durham adopted in defence of Protestantism. It would act as one of those mustard poultices of which Dr. Arnold spoke, and it might have the effect of restoring animation to the lifeless forces of a stolid and conservative Protestantism. The question, however, which meets us here is how a party which appeared to be so infirm, even amongst High Churchmen, thirty years ago, has attained such numbers and power that it is very widely, if not universally, admitted by all parties that the destruction of the Establishment would be the price of its expulsion from the Church. In opposition to the Protestant instincts of the nation, in utter defiance of the scientific temper which is one of the most powerful factors of our age, in contempt of the historic traditions of the Anglican Church and under the scathing criticism of Romanists on the one hand, and Nonconformists upon the other, it has nevertheless steadily made its way. Defeats have only roused it to the display of fresh energy and the advancement of new pretensions. Forty

years ago Dr. Pusey was suspended for the preaching of a doctrine which to-day is proclaimed from hundreds of pulpits without let or hindrance. It has defied all kinds of authority, it has survived every species of attack. It has advanced when it might have been expected to retreat, and, so far from surrendering any of its positions, or abating any of its claims, it has become more exacting in its demands and more uncompromising in its temper. To-day it is the most potent force in the Anglican Church, and it is so strongly felt that its action must have a powerful, if not determining, influence on the future destinies of the Establishment that the rulers of the Church are cowed by its menaces, and show an intense desire, which is almost pitiable in its weakness, to avert its displeasure. The issue of a Royal Commission professedly to inquire into the law, but really to secure a breathing time, and prepare the way for some accommodation with a party whom it is dangerous to offend, is the latest and most emphatic testimony to its power.

There could be no clearer proof that a high sacerdotal policy commands the sympathy of a section of the community, possessed of great social, intellectual, and political influence. Privileged classes have natural affinities, and the aristocracy of birth is likely to make common cause with a priesthood which represents the aristocratic principle in the Church. Individuals may rise superior to the prejudices and traditions of their order, but that the order will incline to the support of authority and privilege, and that it will be sustained by a plutocracy, the one ambition of whose members is to reflect the spirit of the society they aspire to enter, is not to be questioned. The English nobility have patriotic sentiments and Protestant instincts which serve to qualify

this tendency, but among them high Anglicanism is sure to find devoted adherents. Were it only the political feeling by which they were swayed, that might be overcome, and certainly would not have much weight if it were found that the defence of a sacerdotal establishment meant serious peril to the privileges of their own order. But with many there is something much deeper and nobler than a secular feeling of any kind. They have been touched by the spirit of the movement in their own Church. Undoubtedly very much of the purest and most devoted piety in the higher circles of society for some time past has been of the Anglican type. Nor can it be matter of surprise that it should be so. Its mediævalism is not calculated to offend those who cling so fondly to every remnant of feudal supremacy, and whose present greatness is so largely an inheritance bequeathed to them by the past. Its mystic sacramentarianism may repel robust Protestants, but it is attractive to those who have been trained under the influence of Anglican sentiment, and nurtured in the formularies of the Anglican Church.

The best feelings of numbers thus coincide with their class prejudices and proclivities in disposing them to regard with favour the claims of the sacerdotal party. Nor is it the mere fashion of the hour with which the opponents of ecclesiasticism have to reckon. Fashion is variable as the winds of heaven, and though it tells to-day on behalf of one school, will probably on that very account before long incline to the opposite. There is a much stronger because more worthy sentiment, that has its roots in deep convictions and real spiritual sympathies. Ritualism is not a monstrous and abnormal growth, but is much nearer the ideal of the Prayer Book than Puri-

tanism. It is more likely to extend than to be expelled from the Establishment, and while it remains so powerful the National Church cannot command the sympathy of Protestants.

The section under this higher influence is probably numerically feeble, but its social position gives it importance. Combined with the larger party, who love the Prayer Book and hate Puritanism, it is strong enough to defend the Ritualists.

V.

He would be a bold prophet who should undertake to predict how far the reactionary movement will extend. It is evident that it is so largely in harmony with the formularies that the expulsion of it from the Church would be by no means easy, even if there were general agreement as to its expediency. Indeed, were the advanced party to abstain from the objectionable ritual which, though consistent with their system, is by no means essential to it, they might continue to "Catholicize" or Romanize the Church in peace. It is possible that, in abandoning their splendid robes and imposing ceremonies, they would sacrifice very much of their attractiveness, but they would not surrender any principle, and they would not cease to work what to Protestant minds would appear serious mischief. They would still represent the priest as the heaven-appointed dispenser of those sacraments by which alone the soul is nourished, and so invest him with an awful sanctity and tremendous power. They would still enforce the reality of that awful commission which the priest has received from his bishop to loose or retain sins, and insist on the confessional as enabling him to use that authority with wisdom. They

would still exhibit, as the highest act of our religion, a mysterious service in which the priest works a miracle by means of which the worshipper partakes of the body and blood of the Lord. They might still reduce the spiritual teaching of the New Testament into a carnal ordinance, fossilize the more precious truths of religion into the articles of a dead creed, materialize that presence of the Master which is the hope and joy of the Church, and turn the religion of the cross into a degrading superstition. All this the law permits, and all this can be done without the aid of the disputed ritual. It would be surprising that the party should contend so strenuously for these symbols, seeing the attempt to suppress the truth they represent has failed, were it not that this picture-teaching is at once more effective and more ambiguous in appearance. It beguiles numbers who would be unaffected by reasoning, and it can be defended as a harmless development of æsthetics. The party will not readily surrender the advantage it gives them; but even if they were forced into a more simple ceremonial the evil would not be undone.

It is possible that some unwise procedure, some arrogant assertion of priestly power, some bold attempt to extend the authority of the confessional, even some trivial incident which might bring home to the minds of the people the abuses of a system which at heart they detest, may call forth a storm of popular indignation. Hitherto the Ritualists have secured a certain amount of sympathy from the people. They have seen it on its more attractive side—in its love of spectacle, its bright and imposing ritual, its devotion to work for the relief of suffering and distress, its conflict against authority. The Tractarians first and the Ritualists afterwards have

been a party struggling for liberty, and the unthinking have not perceived that these quasi-champions of freedom were really fighting in the interests of spiritual despotism. A certain amount of sympathy has thus often been awakened for a cause which in its principles, its antecedents, and its aims is essentially hostile to all popular rights. The forces which ought really to have been arrayed against it have therefore sometimes been divided, and the watchwords of liberty have often been used with such inimitable skill as to deceive the very elect.

This could not have been the case had the movement been one from above downward, instead of having its origin in the younger and unbeneficed clergy. The Ritualists have often chafed under the opposition of the bishops; they would have had much more reason to complain if the bishops had been in their favour. Their opposition to episcopal authority has been one of the causes of their success. Had that authority been employed on their side it would have been fatal to their hopes. An ambitious hierarch seated on the throne of Canterbury, and possessed with the desire of making Church influence supreme in the kingdom, might for a time have rallied certain social forces to the side of priestly power, but it would not have been long before popular sentiment would have been roused against such a miserable anachronism. The scorn with which Romanizing aggressions have been unwisely regarded would have been exchanged for a feeling of active antagonism, and any act of hierarchical assumption would easily have stirred up a national opposition that would have been absolutely irresistible. Ritualism has largely flourished on the contempt of Liberal theologians and politicians, who seem utterly unable to

realize two facts which are, nevertheless, written broad on every page of Church history—that priestism has its root deep in human nature, and that liberty has no more implacable and deadly foe. A "Catholic" Primate would speedily have dispelled the illusion by which so many liberal minds have been deceived. Under such conditions we should have heard nothing of working men pierced with keen and poignant anguish because of the withdrawal of the precious privileges which their Church had insured them. The miserable pretences which concealed from so many the real nature of the questions at issue would have been dispelled, and some who are now the eager champions of freedom in matters of ceremonial would have seen behind the glare of the spectacle, and the gorgeousness of the vestment, and all the pomp and circumstance of the ritual, the frowning face of the priest, and have discerned in it the clearly marked and ineffaceable lineaments of the despot.

Some trivial incident might easily effect an entire change in the situation. The Anglicans might be tempted into developments so extreme as to compel resistance, or some unwise act of any individual priest might rouse popular indignation. But it does not require any superior penetration to perceive that any hostile movement which had strength and seriousness about it would not stop short of the overthrow of the Establishment itself. Under all the pleas for toleration and charity, urged by certain Liberals on its behalf, may be discovered the secret anxiety as to the safety of an institution for whose sake they would run the risk of the triumph of priestcraft in the nation. On the part of men who have given no doubtful proofs of their allegiance to liberty such policy would be hardly intelligible,

were it not that it is essential to the development of their view as to the comprehensiveness of the National Church. They have no faith in sacramental grace and no belief in priests, but they know that if those who have are excluded from the National Church it will not only cease to be comprehensive, but it will cease to exist altogether. The one point, indeed, is intimately connected with the other. The days for an exclusive Establishment are past, and if it cannot be made comprehensive, the institution is doomed.

VI.

It is open to question whether the extent to which the Church must be revolutionized, if it is to be made so comprehensive as to remove every complaint of injustice, has been by many fully realized. In order to this, it is necessary not only that it should include great diversities of theological opinion, but that it should exclude none. The idea which finds favour on the Episcopal Bench and among the members at Church Congresses is that moderate men of all schools are in agreement upon great principles, and should unite to maintain them, tolerating the peculiarities of each so long as they are not unwisely pressed, but repressing extremes on every side. This is the official idea of comprehensiveness, but it stops very far short of what is necessary in strict fairness, for extreme men are just as much entitled to consideration and liberty as those who, whatever the school to which they belong, must always be moderate and respectable. The ritual of St. Alban's cannot, on any principle of justice, be condemned and the theology of Westminster Abbey tolerated, or a line

of demarcation drawn which would include the clergy who omit the Athanasian Creed, and exclude those who introduce the *Agnus Dei*, nor yet a favour extended to those who would exaggerate every mystic element in the Liturgy which is denied to others who would emulate the simplicity of a Puritan service. There are, indeed, no signs of any disposition to permit any irregularities of the latter kind. It may safely be said that the clergyman who went to the communion table, the pulpit, or even the reading desk in his ordinary attire would meet with none of that indulgence which is accorded to the priests who array themselves in the vestments of Rome. The law would not be found so elastic were appeal made to the Courts for the suppression of this extreme Protestantism, and it may be doubted whether even Evangelical bishops would be found so patient and long-suffering as the right reverend fathers have been amid the wearying trials of sacerdotal obstinacy. It is clear, however, that both extremes must be recognized and even legalized if the Establishment is to answer to the ideal of Erastian liberalism.

The meaning of this is that the Church, when made perfectly comprehensive, will cease in any true sense to be a witness for the faith, for the obvious reason that it will have no faith for which witness is to be borne. It will be the home of those who maintain that there is a Catholic faith which, unless a man hold pure and entire, he shall be damned everlastingly; and of those who deny the faith, and who laugh at the damnation. It will employ as its organs those who demand submission to the priest as the representative of the "Holy Catholic Church," and those who call on men to shake themselves free from the tyranny of both, and use the glorious

liberty of the children of God. Nor are these the only, or even the most important, points on which the Church will speak not with two voices only, but with many. There would not be a question, however important, or going however deep, even to the roots of all religion, on which there would not be the most discordant utterances. Is there a risen Christ? Is there a living God? Is there a revelation of the Divine will? Is there a judgment? These are primary questions of all religion; but to them a comprehensive Church could give no distinct or decisive answer. To all but one of them it returns no positive or unanimous answer even now; but if the theory of comprehension is to be consistently worked out, there can properly be no exception. The Christian will be allowed to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ and call on men to trust and worship Him, but by his side will be another, speaking with equal right in the name of the nation and as one of its clergy, who may proclaim all supernatural religion a delusion, and assert that the resurrection of the Lord was nothing more than the wild illusion of a devoted woman's imagination, by which the world has been deceived for centuries. Questions of priest or no priest, authority or freedom, symbolic or simple worship, sink into insignificance beside this of Christ or no Christ. But this must be relegated to the same category as vestments and incense, priests and sacraments, if the Church is to be made comprehensive. A national Church must include all doctrines, which practically means that it must exclude all. The plea for its continuance must be sustained on the ground not of generosity but justice; and justice implies not the tolerance of differences which may not be regarded as involving vital questions,

but equal rights for all varieties of thought. The underlying principle of the system is that doctrine is of no value, and that a National Church should be an institution to promote conduct, not to inculcate dogma. To adopt such a theory as the law of the Anglican Church would be a revolution more complete than was ever contemplated by the most extreme men of the Reformation. It would inflict on the Church an injury more serious than the most strenuous of its Nonconformist opponents would propose. They would deprive it of State dignities and emoluments, but these comprehensive reformers would deprive it of its creeds. The one would overthrow the Establishment, the other would destroy the Church. The one would touch only the meat, the other would extinguish the life. The one would interfere only with the material accidents, the other would get rid of the spiritual essence.

Such a change we are not likely to see. Its advocates would shrink from challenging the opinion of the nation or of Parliament upon it; and the utmost for which they hope is that the drift of events will be in its favour. The House of Lords has recently been described as "a proud patrician assembly, whose High Church bias is interwoven with a certain impatience of theological or ecclesiastical proclivities of any pronounced type." The combination is a strange one. It is not confined to the Lords, but is found very widespread among the adherents of the Established Church of all classes. Its representatives have materially helped the Broad Church party; but though they are in sympathy with their tendencies, they would instinctively, as well as from motives of policy, shrink from the ultimate conclusion to which they lead. They understand what the late

Earl of Beaconsfield put in such epigrammatic form in reply to the representations of one of the school. "Admirable theory this of a Church so broad that it has no doctrine—but then, no dogma, no dean." The Church as an aristocratic constitution, as an outer defence of the whole system of privilege, as an eminently decorous and respectable institution, as a force on behalf of order, may be much dearer to them than any particular form of doctrine, but they know perfectly well that to surrender doctrine altogether would be to sacrifice everything. They are very impatient of all earnestness, they dislike decided and pronounced theological opinions, they hate enthusiasm, inasmuch as they see in it danger to their pleasant compromises and to the comfortable nests they have prepared for easy consciences. But they dread even more the latitudinarianism which, by teaching men to do without a creed and without a Christ, would train them to do without a Church.

Nothing indeed could be more hollow than the boasted comprehensiveness of the Establishment as it at present exists. Beyond the small circle of men who are really tolerant in spirit, the presence of opposite schools in the Church is endured not welcomed. The Evangelical is forced to submit to the fellowship of the Anglican, and even of the Ritualist, and he, in his turn, is compelled to tolerate Protestants who regard his ceremonies as mummeries and himself as a traitor and an impostor. No one is deceived by this show of outward union, and, unfortunately, there is a prevalent suspicion that it is suffered solely because of the secular advantages which must be sacrificed by one or other, and possibly by both, if it were dissolved. The injury to religion resulting from this belief it is not possible to measure. When the

Bennett judgment was pronounced, the Dean of Westminster exultingly pointed to it as the "last and crowning triumph of the Christian latitudinarianism of the Church of England." And the very extravagance of Mr. Bennett's positions, by offering the most crucial test for the application of these just and wise principles, signalizes the extent of the victory thus obtained in the cause of freedom." The blinding influence of Erastian prejudice could hardly go beyond this. The description of the judgment is itself wrong. The Judicial Committee did not pronounce that the Church of England was intended to comprehend the doctrine which Mr. Bennett taught, but simply that Mr. Bennett had not so taught it as to bring his book within the purview of the law. It was a triumph not of Christian latitudinarianism, but of legal subtlety on the part either of Mr. Bennett, in employing terms which did not actually traverse the language of the formularies, or of the Court in discovering some ingenious method of excusing what all plain men would have condemned. But, accepting the Dean's own statement, in what does he rejoice? In the uncertainty of the Anglican Church on a point of such vital importance? In its refusal to determine whether or not the minister in the Communion Service was a priest working a miraculous change, and dispensing a supernatural benefit? Or is it in the acquiescence of both parties in a decision which ought to have satisfied neither? Mr. Bennett preached what he maintained to be the doctrine of the "Holy Catholic Church," and the Court emphatically denied that it was the doctrine of the Church of England. Yet he remained in a Church which thus repudiates Catholic truth, content that the Court had pronounced his phraseology ambiguous, though his doc-

trine was erroneous, and that it had therefore refused to deprive him of his benefice. On the other hand, the Evangelicals had condemned both his teaching and himself in strongest terms, and yet when they found that they must tolerate both if they were to remain in the Establishment, submitted not only without a murmur, but with positive thankfulness. In which of these two parties is the triumph of Christian latitudinarianism seen? The world knows that if there is one thing which each hates, more than it hates the doctrine of the other, it is this very latitudinarianism, which they all agreed in regarding as distinctly unchristian, if not absolutely antichristian.

VII.

We become so familiar with the shams and pretences in the midst of which we live that we are apt to forget the aspect which they wear to those who have not had a similar experience. To us they are forms which have lost something of their significance, but nothing worse. Outsiders, however, do not always take the same charitable view. Is it not certain that this must be the case in relation to this talk about the comprehensiveness of the Anglican Church? Intelligent men, who have read the history or studied the formularies, know that the Establishment was not intended to have this latitudinarian character. They know that if any attempt were made to secure legislative sanction for this idea it would meet with resolute opposition from both the great schools which at present benefit by its application. They cannot read the vehement language employed on both sides, or see how completely the two parties are divided from each other—the Jews having no

dealings with the Samaritans—and believe that there is any real union. And it is not possible that they can hear all this talk about breadth and charity, knowing at the same time that the one great trouble of the rulers of the Church is to prevent an open rupture, without conceiving a disgust at the system, and it is well if it does not pass into a disbelief in religion itself.

The position of the party which claims to represent the principle of authority in this unnatural alliance is so hopelessly illogical that it is not surprising that it should be assailed with special severity by those whose sympathy Ritualists are most anxious to secure. A Roman Catholic critic, who holds the opinion that, "except as a disturbing influence, Ritualism is not less nationally than ecclesiastically insignificant," has exposed its inconsistency with a merciless severity. "We now find one stronghold of the latitudinarian principle—namely, that dogma is unimportant—in the midst of the party of authority, of that High Church party which sprung into fresh life fifty years ago, for the express purpose of fighting Liberalism. . . . The party that once fought for the true doctrine of Baptism and for the inspiration of Holy Scripture, are now content to remain in union with those who deny both. Indeed, they absolutely boast of the diversity of opinion allowable in their communion, and endeavour to prove that there are great advantages in belonging to a body which can find room within it for High, Low, and Broad Churchmen. High Churchmen, in virtue of their newly developed Liberalism, will even admit that from both the other schools of Anglican thought they may learn much; in other words, that from those who end by disbelieving in all sacramental grace, and from those who end by denying

the Incarnation, the men who confess both truths may practically be instructed."[1] The reproach is keen, but its sting is in its truth. Each of the parties in the Establishment has to sacrifice something of that which it holds most precious; but the High Churchman is, perhaps, the greatest sufferer of all. For with him the Church is everything, and as he has recently begun to discover, the very idea of the Church is fading away, if it be not already lost. There was something almost pathetic in the outburst, partly of indignant surprise, partly of sorrowful despair, with which the Dean of St. Paul's protested against the notion that "the Established Church is what Parliament makes or allows it to be and nothing more." Apparently the idea had but lately suggested itself to him, and his whole soul rose up in revolt against it. The sentiment was honourable to him as a Christian, but the earnestness with which it was expressed only showed how absolutely he had failed to appreciate the real nature of an Established Church. Among other absurd and startling results which would follow, were this monstrous proposition from which he started once granted, is the conclusion that "all that is found in the books of our greatest masters of religious teaching, in all churches and sects, about the nature of the Christian Church is ranting nonsense." Nothing could be more true, and yet it does not prove that there is any mistake in the view of the Established Church which has excited such natural and righteous indignation on the part of this eminent and conscientious Churchman. High Churchmen are simply living in dreamland when they believe that there is some body distinct from the nation itself which is called the

[1] *Dublin Review*, No. 176.

Church. It is a painful fact for them to face, that they have so absolutely sacrificed the Church for the sake of the Establishment that the difficulty now is to separate between the two. But the pity is 'tis true. The bishops and clergy are not the Church; convocation is not the Church; the communicants in any parish are not the Church. The law recognizes the nation, and the nation only, as the Church. In other words, the Church, in the sense attached to it by the Dean of St. Paul's and men of his type, has no existence. Erastians not only know this but wish it to be so, and would purposely make formularies elastic in order that the Church may be co-extensive with the nation. The marvel is that High Churchmen, instead of being content to shelter themselves under the toleration which would thus be accorded them, do not resent it as an insult to every principle which they love. Their watchword is "Hear the Church," and they are content to identify themselves with a system which leaves them without a Church to hear.

The innumerable expedients which are being continually suggested for the purpose of preserving the Establishment furnish the most emphatic testimony to its weakness and decay. The extreme proposals to which we are continually listening are themselves sufficient evidence of a widespread impression that the condition of the Establishment is so desperate as to demand the application of drastic remedies. An Archbishop has recently said that what the crisis needs is some great work of charity in the performance of which party dissensions might be forgotten. But if earnest zeal, active benevolence, and large-hearted liberality could have averted present disorders, there would not

be the excitement of the present conflict. The bishops were never so learned, so devoted, so worthy of personal respect. There was never so large a proportion of the clergy intent upon the earnest discharge of the duties of their office. There never was so anxious a desire on the part of the members of the Establishment to adapt its agencies to the necessities of the times and of the country. But, as the consequence of all this, there is a passionate resentment of the control to which the National Church is subject. In the minds of numbers there is a sense of the spirituality and dignity of the Church of Christ which makes the conditions of life in the Establishment simply intolerable.

VIII.

If earnest Churchmen are thus unwilling to have their Church identified with the nation unless the nation consist really of its own members, Nonconformists on their side are equally opposed to the idea of comprehension which is the favourite dream of liberal Erastians. And Nonconformity is too powerful an element in the nation to be much longer relegated to a position of inferiority. Nearly half a century has passed since Arnold said, "Yet I do not see how any man can resist the impression that Dissent cannot exist much longer in this country as it does now; either it must be comprehended within the Church, or it will cease in another way by there being no Establishment to dissent from. And as I think that men will never be wise and good enough for the first, so I see everything tending towards the second." If there was little prospect of comprehension then, there is infinitely less now. The Oxford

revival has made the gulf between the Church and Dissent wider than ever. Nonconformists have never been so enamoured of a State Church as to be ready to surrender their religious faith for the sake of its secular privileges. To-day this feeling is stronger than ever. They were never less likely to ignore their deepest convictions as to the rights of Christ in His own Church, to falsify their own professions and dishonour the memory of their fathers, as to turn their glorious history into a mockery and a reproach. But it is not more certain that the Church cannot become in any true sense the Church of the nation than it is that the age will not tolerate the perpetuation of sectarian privilege. All the forces of public opinion are tending in the direction of religious equality and hastening the accomplishment of Arnold's prediction, that Dissent will cease because there will be no Established Church to dissent from. The real difficulty at this moment is the question as to the disposal of the funds which the State Church at present enjoys, and practical statesmen will not allow that obstacle long to stand in the way of a reform which justice imperatively demands, and which will certainly be in the interests of true religion. The day which will bring emancipation to the Church from the fetters of the State, and to Dissenters from the wrong which they have suffered for centuries, is rapidly coming. When that change is accomplished, it will be as new life from the dead to all the Churches; but most of all to that one which is now disposed to regard the loss of privilege as a cruel injury, but will then discover to its surprise how much its weak craving for that support which the State can give has cramped and fettered the spiritual force in which its real strength consists.

LECTURE X.

THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN.

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THE Established Church has occupied a larger space in these Lectures than that to which it could be considered fairly entitled either by its numbers or the special earnestness of its clergy and members, or by the superior value of the work that it is doing. No candid person would deny that, to whatever causes it may be due—and those causes are certainly social and political rather than theological or ecclesiastical—the clergy of the Established Church make the most valuable contributions to theological literature. But this is the only point in which the Free Churches may not fairly challenge comparison with those who enjoy the special privileges the State gives to the Church it has established. It is scarcely too much to say that the reason of the difference in this one point is not that the Episcopalian system necessarily commands the allegiance of men of learning, but rather that its privileged position has secured for its clergy such abundant facilities for culture, and so many opportunities for learned leisure, as to give it on this point a vantage-ground over Dissenting communities. Be that as it may, in other respects the voluntary Churches are doing their full share of the religious work of the nation, and it might seem at first sight

as though the brief space which will be assigned to them, in this survey of our ecclesiastical world, were out of all proportion to that which has been given to their great rival.

But this difference, as must be apparent to all who have followed the course of thought in these lectures, is due partly to the heterogeneous character of the Establishment, and partly to the relations which it sustains to the State. It is one Church system, but whether it includes two or more religions, it certainly includes at at least two Churches. It thus presents an extremely complicated problem, and one which needs to be studied from different standpoints. There is nothing parallel to this in the state of Dissenting communities. No doubt in all of them, and chiefly in those which are the freest of the whole, the Congregational Churches, Baptist and Pædobaptist alike—there are diversities of opinion, but, except in a few rare cases, these cannot be regarded as even opposing schools of thought, still less as Church parties. In all Churches we find individuals—æsthetic or rigidly simple in taste—severe or lax in their conceptions of Church authority—reverencing the past with a servility that approaches superstition, or treating it with an indifference that approaches to contempt—pronounced in their individualism or trusting to organization ; and we have here the elements of parties that may be regarded as High, or Low, or Broad. But in Dissenting Churches these varieties have not become so divergent as to lead to the formation of parties. Besides, they stand aloof entirely from the State, and thus the two points which have occupied us almost entirely in relation to the Established Church—its internal divisions, and its union with the State—hardly arise at all in connection with

Dissenting systems. The one exception is that of the divisions which have occurred in the great Methodist family; and though they have led to the formation of new communities, they are not to be compared with those which destroy the unity without affecting the uniformity of the Established Church. The survey of Dissent is therefore much more simple than the survey of the Establishment. There is as much ground to be surveyed, but it is not as rugged and broken and difficult for the surveyor.

The story of the various Dissenting Churches during the century consists chiefly of a record of work for Christ quietly done and crowned with a large measure of success, of a struggle for rights and liberties sternly denied them until they had the power of claiming them for themselves, of development and growth both in principle and in intellectual freedom and force. The first has not many salient points that need detain the ecclesiastical student, the second has been already dealt with, the last is the only point which requires extended treatment. There are three distinct types of Church life among these voluntary communities. In the first we have a very complete and elaborate organization; in the second we have a combination of independence in the individual Churches, with such co-operation for common objects as is compatible with the preservation of these self-governing rights; in the third we have a distinct repudiation of all organized forms of Christianity. The Methodists and Presbyterians are of the first order, the Congregationalists in both their branches represent the second, the Plymouth Brethren are the extreme type of the last, while the Society of Friends approaches very nearly to it, though still having a definite organization of its own. These

three types of a voluntary Christianity will successively pass under review, beginning with that in which is found the most rudimentary form of Church association.

I.

The Plymouth Brethren are hardly more than half a century old. They are among the creations of the age, and despite their stern opposition to the present evil world, it is easy to see the influence of the age upon them. To a considerable extent, no doubt, they are the product of a reaction against powerful tendencies at work in the Church and in general society. Their natural history is not very difficult to understand even by those who are not prepared to explain their genesis and progress. A distinguished ecclesiastic says of the sect, "There is much attraction for the leisurely class of what may be called semi-professional society, which is found in towns inhabited by retired officers, and in the system of every one having a psalm and an interpretation ; and the sect is largely recruited from this class of persons."[1] This last fact is undoubted. Retired officers and leisurely gentlemen have been very prominent among the Brethren, who, in general, seem quite capable of appreciating the advantages that accrue from the reflected lustre of their social rank. But it would be an extremely shallow view of the subject to regard the success which has attended the Plymouth Brethren entirely, or even chiefly, to causes of the kind specified. That there is an exaggerated individualism in the whole conception of the system, if system it can fairly be called, no unprejudiced man who has studied the writings or observed the action

[1] Blunt's *Dictionary of Sects.*

of the party can reasonably doubt. There is a strong recoil from all kinds of authority, and an opposition to every sort of restraint, based on the theory that each individual may himself become—indeed, if he be a true brother in Christ Jesus, ought to become — an organ of the Holy Ghost. How calculated such an idea is to foster spiritual arrogance and conceit, how it meets the opposite extreme of the Romish Church, by substituting Brethren for the Pope as the voice of the Spirit of God, how attractive it may become to those who can entertain the conception and regard themselves as commissioned from heaven, it would be superfluous to point out. But it would be unfair, not to say uncharitable, to regard this as the sole or main influence in attracting recruits to this remarkable society, or rather congeries of societies.

From very early days there have been in the Church those who have distinguished themselves by a severe asceticism, an extreme literalism in the interpretation of Scripture, a protest against the corruptions which they alleged to be prevalent in the Church. What the Donatists were in the early Church, what the severe monastic orders were to Rome in the days of their pristine purity, are the Plymouth Brethren in relation to Protestantism. It may seem hard to trace a resemblance between the monastic orders and those who carry to an extreme the Protestant principle. But monkery in its purer days and nobler form was an attempt to cultivate a higher type of godliness than that which was general in the Church. In its root-idea of separation, though not in the form in which it was developed, it corresponded exactly with the principle which the Brethren lay down as to their own relations to the world.

It is not easy to lay down any absolute law as to

the conditions under which movements of this kind towards an ideal purity are likely to develope themselves. But, in general, it may be said that in ages of luxury, when the Church has felt something of the prevailing love of ease and indulgence, in times succeeding an era of great spiritual excitement, when the early zeal has grown cold, and a spirit of routine has weakened the Church's spirit and energy, and in periods of speculative activity, when the authority of revelation is threatened, such efforts after purer godliness are pretty sure to be made. Our own age answers all these conditions, and justice binds us to say that the beginnings of the Plymouth Brother movement were an honest striving after a higher spiritual life. Good men sought to develope a purer type of religion than that which they found in the Established Church to which most of them belonged. When the peculiar position of the Evangelical party in that Church is remembered, the rise and progress of such a movement becomes easily intelligible, and in its early history, at all events, there is not a little to admire.

II.

The rise of Plymouth Brotherism was almost contemporaneous with that of Tractarianism, and, far apart as the two systems appear to be, they were partly due to the action of similar causes. In both cases there was a dissatisfaction with the state of spiritual life, and a longing for something more real, more elevated in tone, more practical in results. In both there was a revolt against the spirit of routine and conventionalism which had fallen like an untimely blight upon the Evangelicals in the Established Church, and had affected the Dissent-

ing communities as well. In both there was a feeling that the idea of the universal Church had been lost, and craving for its embodiment in some outward form. These feelings of course revealed themselves in very different ways. But it is important to note that at the root of both lay a deep discontent with existing Churches, and especially with the Church of England, from which the early Brethren were seceders. In confirmation of this view, it is worthy of observation that F. W. Newman, in his search after the truth, the manifest earnestness of which commands our admiration, even as the result awakens our sorrow, halted for a time among the Plymouth Brethren. The movement, in its inception, was undoubtedly a reaction against clericalism, ecclesiasticism, formalism, and worldliness.

The society or "assembly," as the Brethren love to call it, was a development. There was no purpose on the part of its founders of establishing any new sect or party. A few men with spiritual affinities, desiring a religious fellowship which they could not find in the ordinary services of their Church, grouped themselves in small companies and held periodical meetings for the study of the Scriptures, for Christian conference, and for prayer. From the very beginning the movement had attractions for devout men of high social position and some culture. Mr. Darby, who was one of the leading spirits in Dublin, and who is said by those who have had personal acquaintance with the inner life of the Brethren to wield a power over his followers to which there is no parallel among ecclesiastics, except in the case of the Pope himself, was originally a curate of the Church of Ireland. Mr. Benjamin W. Newton, who was one of the principal members of the similar society in Plymouth, which has

given its name to the movement, was a fellow of Exeter College, Oxford. Dr. Tregelles, another of the Plymouth company, was a distinguished Biblical scholar. Mr. A. Groves, who, perhaps, rather than Mr. Darby or Mr. Newton, may be regarded as the promoter of these meetings, but who early withdrew from the party when, on a return from a visit to the East, he found that their social religious gatherings were rapidly developing into a distinct sectarian organization, was a student for the Anglican ministry at Trinity College, Dublin. The Brethren despise culture, and yet apart from men of culture it is hard to see how the movement could have had such success. There was nothing in any of them to mark them out as heaven-born leaders of a new religious party which was to undertake the renovation of Christendom. Whatever may be thought of their wisdom, there can be no question of the sincere piety either of these men or of Müller and Craik, who, having been in the habit of meeting at Teignmouth for "breaking bread and exercising open ministry," migrated to Bristol, and there established the society which has subsequently played so remarkable a part in the history of Plymouthism. Even with the story before us of the furious controversies which afterwards broke out between the two sections, and which resulted in a distinct schism among the Brethren, and of the intolerance, bigotry, and passion which were exhibited by Mr. Darby, it would be uncharitable to deny that they were all men of pure motive and deep spiritual feeling. Their views were narrow, and their judgment often strangely warped; the spirit of some of them rapidly developed into that severity and exclusiveness which are the principal blots upon the fame of the party; their conceptions of Christian life and work were

unpractical and visionary; but there is no reason to doubt that they were good men, and that their first idea was to cultivate a more spiritual type of piety than that which was common in any of the Churches.

III.

The first step towards separation was an arrangement for a weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. The proposal was made by Mr. Groves in perfect innocence of any ulterior designs. It was unquestionably in direct opposition to the teachings of his own Church, in whose view the celebration of the Eucharist is something very different from this simple gathering of a few Christian friends to "spread a table" and break bread after the primitive model, which was all that Mr. Groves desired. That such an innovation was pretty sure to lead further might have been safely predicted by any one who had studied the history of ecclesiastical movements, but no thought of sectarian action seems to have been in the mind of the mover. All that he desired was to give an additional solemnity and tenderness to meetings for religious communion, which were greatly enjoyed and highly prized by those associated together, and to bear a more emphatic testimony of their faith by a more frequent attention to a duty which their Lord had enjoined, but which had fallen into strange neglect. On this last point there would appear already to have been a tacit dissent from the ordinary practice of their own Church at the time in the monthly celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the germ of that strange and subtle sympathy with Ritualism, in its exaltation of the sacrament as the chief act of Christian worship, which is so marked

and, at the same time, so unexpected a feature in the movement. But of such a tendency Mr. Groves and his friends were wholly unconscious. They intended only to cement the bond of their own fellowship, and at the same time more constantly to show forth the Lord's death. That a new form of Church life would develope itself out of this simple act was not only what they did not anticipate, but what most of them would certainly have deprecated and done their utmost to avert.

But the force of the influences which had been set in action was too strong for them. They had embarked with the view of enjoying a pleasant sail over a tranquil lake, and unexpectedly they found themselves drifting out into the open sea, without compass or pilot, forced hither and thither by the strength of the various currents by which they were affected. A leader with strong will and firm hand managed to seize the rudder and steer whithersoever he would, continually changing his course in obedience to some fresh impulse, but ever venturing further into the ocean and away from all the well-known landmarks. In hard prose, the whole character of the movement changed rapidly and, to most of those engaged in it, insensibly. What was meant to be an informal fellowship of men of all Churches became an aggressive and often violent crusade against every Church, and, indeed, against the radical idea of the Church. Instead of an association for mutual edification, it became an organization for protest against what its members regarded as evil, finding the bond of its unity not so much in its adherence to truth as in its protest against error. What had been designed to be a catholic and unsectarian assembly had been transformed into a new sect, with principles more exclusive and spirit more

arrogant than could be found in the Churches which its members had begun loudly to denounce. This is not the view of hostile critics only, it is that which is presented in the strongest way by Mr. Groves, who went out on a mission to Bagdad, and returned to find the most complete transformation in the fellowship of which he had been a founder, and in whose success he was so deeply interested.

Writing in 1836 to his old friend and ally, Mr. Darby, he says: "I feel it needs but a step or two more to advance, and you will see the evils of the systems from which you profess to be separated to spring up among yourselves. The transition your little body has undergone, in no longer standing forth the witnesses for the glorious and simple truth, so much as standing forth witnesses against all that they judge error, has lowered them in my opinion from heaven to earth as witnesses." The spirit of the party could not have been better described. Whatever might have been the advantages of the early meetings, and however attractive similar gatherings may still be to those who look at them from the outside, and see in them only sacred havens of spiritual refreshment, presenting a welcome contrast to the world, with its feverish excitements, its frivolous pleasures, or its heated competition for gain and power, and even to the Church, with its stilted formalism, its cold propriety, or its apathetic and heartless routine, the influence of the Brethren has ever developed further and yet further in the direction indicated by one who thus records the disappointment of his early hopes. It is curious to note how many of those who were once connected with the sect, and by their names shed a lustre upon it, have either voluntarily withdrawn from

it or have been placed under its ban. There is not one of the brotherhood who has secured for it more of general sympathy than the devoted, self-denying George Müller of Bristol; but of those who give to Plymouthism the credit of his pure name, there are comparatively few who know that he is proscribed of the sect, that his friends and adherents are regarded with a more intense bitterness than is felt even towards professing Christians in general, and that Bethesda, his chapel, "has given its name to the most malignant controversy, in the very bosom of Plymouthism, of which we have any record in ecclesiastical history."[1] His friend and colleague Mr. Craik was a man who, for simple devotion, childlike piety, and scriptural learning, was surpassed by but few in any Church, but he was forced by the exclusiveness of the Brethren into exile from a society of which he was one of the earliest and most distinguished ornaments. Dr. Tregelles was an eminent Biblical scholar, who was attracted by what seemed to be the primitive simplicity and spirituality of devoted Christians striving after a higher ideal of godliness; but he, too, was alienated by the bitter temper of the sectary, which revealed itself as soon as the societies assumed a more formal and definite character. It would be easy to multiply instances of this kind. Plymouthism has found most of its keenest assailants among those who were once dazzled by its attractive appearance and alluring promises, and the earnestness of whose opposition is due to the keenness of their disappointment.

[1] *The British Quarterly Review*, October, 1863.

IV.

The influence exerted wherever the sect has made itself at all felt has been disintegrating, disturbing, and dividing. The mission of the Brethren is to destroy rather than to construct. They are not content to test the efficacy of their system by making aggressions upon the unconverted world—where, alas! is a field so wide for all of us to cultivate that no Church need or ought to envy the success of another which is reclaiming any part of the dreary waste of sin—but distinctly seek to gather the people of the Lord out of the Churches where they are at present happy, and where they are probably doing real service. They have recently been more active in evangelistic services, but even these are frequently so arranged as to interfere with the work of other Churches, rather than to carry on independent labours of their own. It is their distinction to reverse the principle of the apostle, who, with that lofty chivalry and true delicacy characteristic of the Christian gentleman, wrote to the Romans, "So have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation." They have left it to others to plough up the fallow ground, to cleanse it from weeds, to scatter the seed, and watch over the early growth of the plant; for themselves they have reserved the easier and more grateful task of reaping the harvest. Of the vineyards which they have not planted they have sought to eat the fruit. Alone among professing Christians they are avowedly engaged on a mission of proselytism. The Roman Catholic Church comes nearest to them in this as in some other particulars, but even it has its missions to the heathen, though it may also have Jesuits engaged in

the work of converting Protestant heretics. With its ideas of the Church it could perhaps do nothing else, for to turn a Protestant from the error of his ways is to save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins. Whether the Plymouth Brother has as valid a reason to justify his action to his own mind or not, he certainly has none which can give it in the view of others even such a measure of plausible respectability as may attach to the contention of a Church which vindicates its right to proselyte on the ground that it has the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Some of the Brethren may be disposed to advance such a pretension, but it would only be to provoke universal laughter. Apart, however, from any such claim, they make it their main business to detach Christians from the Churches where they have a religious home, instead of seeking to attract sinners to Jesus Christ. Wherever they go, their path is marked by discontent in Churches, heart-grief to pastors, divisions in families, and separations among those who have been as choice friends. Their hand is against every Church, and if the hand of every Church is not against them, it is partly, perhaps, because the real extent of the danger has not been understood, and partly because their fair appearance has served to disarm suspicion. Numbers of pure and honest souls have been unable to believe that professions so specious concealed designs so destructive of Christian usefulness and harmony, or that those who talked so fairly of charity and unsectarianism were themselves representatives of a sectarianism more narrow in its theory, more severe in its judgments, more uncharitable in temper, and more unscrupulous in modes of action, than that of any other sect in Christendom. "The words of their mouths are smoother than butter, but war

is in their heart; their words are softer than oil, yet are they drawn swords."

It is undeniable that despite these tendencies the Brethren have from time to time succeeded in gathering into their ranks men of high religious character. Dr. Judson, with whose noble work in Burmah they so sadly interfered, regarded their spirit as one of the perils to which men of eminent goodness are peculiarly liable. "They have got hold," he says, "of ——, and have utterly ruined him; that is, his usefulness in this world. When the arch-enemy of souls finds a Christian so weaned from the world as to be inaccessible to all the grosser modes of temptation, he first dons this sheep's clothing of Plymouthism, and, in despair of getting this particular soul, puts a veto on the man's usefulness, to the serious detriment of hundreds and thousands of others." Dr. Judson records here the results of his own bitter experience. His view may be highly coloured, but it is certain that the Brethren do lay hold of many highly esteemed in the Churches to which they belong. They are not those who can fairly be regarded as of the highest in spiritual strength and character, although, in a strange but prevalent misuse of the term, they are very often described as the most spiritually-minded. They are those in whom spiritual susceptibility is developed to such an extent as to become positively morbid; or those who, in the first flush of a new religious life, are ready to listen to all who impress them with a sense of spiritual earnestness and Christian sympathy; or those whose simple and unsuspecting goodness makes them the easy prey of men who have so much in common with themselves, and whose subversive tendencies are at first hidden under words that breath only

devout aspiration. With rare exceptions the converts made by the Brethren are lacking in robustness of intellect, but they are very often characterized by genuine piety, which is strong and intensive, if not deep and comprehensive. Men of higher intellectual and spiritual endowment are sooner or later enlightened as to the real tendencies of the system and forsake it. With rare exceptions it is the more simple-minded and unwary, whose vision is bounded by the walls of their own narrow dwelling-places, who are inaccessible to large ideas and incapable of taking extended views of principles or institutions, who look at most subjects from an angle, and are full of little crotchets and fancies, who remain attached to the system. Its influence even on this class is not generally happy. It narrows sympathies which need rather to be expanded; it developes a conceit which ought to be sternly repressed; it diverts from practical service to the study of curious questions that minister not to edifying; it encourages an unhealthy introspection where there is need for the more healthy and bracing influence of stern conflict and unwelcome duty. As far as it is possible, it shuts up in what is practically a cloister those whose whole character would be improved by having to face the rude blasts of worldly opposition. It therefore stunts the growth and distorts the character of their piety. It mars the effect of their many noble qualities and real services, it disqualifies them for various kinds of Christian service imperatively demanded by the wants of the times. A maimed and mutilated Christian life at best is that which is formed under its influence, and unfortunately it is regarded as piety of the noblest growth. Were all Christians to accept its principles and act upon its teachings the indirect

power of the gospel in shaping the thought and life of the world would be utterly lost. Still it would be unjust to deny that the Brethren are often devout, if rarely intelligent; sincere and conscientious, if narrow and exclusive; pursuing it may be an imperfect and one-sided ideal of Christian character, but pursuing it with an undeniable earnestness; often developing graces and beauties of Christian character sometimes forgotten by others who have reached a loftier stature and have a firmer grasp of Christian truth and principle.

It is by these higher qualities that so many are won. It is necessary again to remember that the appeals of the Brethren are made chiefly to those who are already in sympathy with spiritual aims and hopes, and to whom nothing is more attractive than communion with souls which appear already to have reached those heights of goodness that they themselves are so anxious to climb. Possibly they find in their intercourse with Plymouth Brethren a tone in conversation and a mode of looking at all subjects to which they have not been accustomed, and which to them seem indicative of a spiritual intensity, a more complete absorption of mind and heart in the things of the Spirit, a fuller realization of the Divine presence and of the Divine law in life, than is seen in Christians of the ordinary type. Especially is there a constant reference to Scripture, which makes a favourable impression on the minds of this class. Here is just what they have been seeking, but have been unable to discover in their old friends with whom they have met. If religious people are not cold and formal, they are full of their Church, or of some religious organization with which they are identified, and have none of the freshness of spirit and elevation of feeling to be found in those

who have shaken themselves free from the trammels of sect and system that they may devote themselves more entirely to their Master. Everywhere in the Churches there is the unceasing clatter of machinery, and in the eager care about it the freedom and fervour of the Spirit are lost. But in this sacred inclosure there is room for the play of impulse and enthusiasm. There is spontaneity and elasticity. The Spirit of the Lord is there, and there is liberty. This is the bright vision which is presented to the eye of the neophyte, and he is drawn into the association by the charm of what appears to him a more living piety and the hope that by communion with its subjects he may rise to their level. If the Churches are successfully to resist the encroachments of Plymouthism in its best form, they must display more of that spirit of intense earnestness and freedom from conventionalism to which the Brethren owe so much of their success.

There is another kind of influence employed by the Brethren which unfortunately may tell just as powerfully as the attraction of their personal goodness. The fundamental idea of the system, when it began to take formal shape, was "Christendom in ruins," and on this was based the appeal to the children of God to come out from it and be separate. Every Church is wrong because in every one believers and unbelievers are commingled, because every one has assumed a sectarian character and organization, and, apart from all special errors of its own, every one denies the presidency of the Spirit and His living action in the Church. It is the duty of the Brethren to expose all this evil, and as far as possible to withdraw souls from its pernicious influence. Hence they are only fulfilling a solemn obligation when they are seeking to

unmask the formalisms of the Christian world; and, if report be true, there is no lack of heartiness and zeal in their discharge of this self-assumed responsibility. They are not restrained by considerations of modesty or charity, by respect for the feelings of others, or even by the memory of the most sacred associations of their own former days. The youth will correct his elder, perhaps even his own parent, with all the confidence of an oracle. The mere learner who has got a smattering of knowledge will undertake to instruct men who have had a large experience of human life, and have employed years in the diligent study of the word of God. The uncultured and ignorant will undertake to promulgate some new interpretation of Scripture with a dogmatism that does not allow the possibility of error, and will not brook a word of contradiction. The convert who once gratefully acknowledged the debt he owed to one by whom God had awakened and enlightened him, will turn round upon the preacher whom he once recognized as his spiritual father, and treat him as an outcast from the kingdom of God. A strange development of the beauty of holiness is this arrogant assumption of the right to sit in judgment upon all professors and their practices, and to declare that all who do not bear the endorsement of the little company are not of the Christian family. But it is one of the characteristic points in the work of the Brethren.

Alas! it is only too captivating to a large number of minds. All societies are more or less open to the criticisms and complaints of their members. Societies have no personality, and are assumed to have no susceptibility, and are regarded therefore as subjects on which a good deal of indignation and murmuring may be expended without much injury being done. Churches are no

exception to the rule. Every one who is at unrest with his own soul is prone to quiet conscience by laying the responsibility on the Church. In truth, there is enough in most Churches to supply material for adverse comment, especially to those who look only at the outside, and look in the hope and desire of discovering what is wrong and evil. There are few occupations in which any Christian could engage less profitable and more unworthy than this endeavour to detect all the faults in a Christian community. His judgment is sure to be unfair, and the effect on his own soul of this scrutiny into the errors and shortcomings of others most disastrous. The very spirit in which he enters on his observations helps to distort all that he sees. The eye is jaundiced, and its vision misleading. Where it perceives only cold formalism, there may be an ardent devotion, not less intense because its expression is restrained. Where it can discover only self-satisfied ease, prim self-righteousness, and apathetic optimism, there may be an underlying discontent with present attainments and a secret crying of the soul to God for richer and fuller grace. It is comparatively little we can learn of the deepest emotions of the most spiritual men from outward appearances. They are the very men who are most prone to draw the veil over their feelings, and it is the most sacred of all these feelings which are most carefully hidden from the vulgar gaze. All this is forgotten in the rash and uncharitable judgments which are passed by censors of the school in question upon Churches. They are careful about the externals of religion, therefore they are formal. They are averse to sensation, therefore they are stiff and rigid. They do not indulge in perpetual lamentations, therefore they fancy themselves rich and increased

in goods, and having need of nothing. They are not prepared to enact a new code of morality, prohibiting certain practices assumed to be worldly and to enforce it with penalties of excommunication, therefore they are given up to the love of the world, and the love of the Father is not in them. They make what appear to them necessary arrangements for the conduct of public worship and the maintenance of the institutions of the Church, therefore they lack faith in the Spirit of God and His promised grace. It is a very easy process of judgment, but as shallow and deceptive as it is easy.

Still there are many who, as they have not found all they desired and anticipated in the Church, are willing to believe that there is something wrong in it. The more quiet movements and restrained feelings of ordinary Church life do not approve themselves to those who are aglow with the fervour of a revival to which they owe their own conversion. The practical affairs of a Church have a certain mean and sordid aspect in the eyes of those who are touched with the mystical temper, and do not seem to comprehend the truth taught to Peter in the vision that heralded the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, "What God hath cleansed that call not thou common nor unclean." The commercial activity or political ardour of Christian professors seems of the very essence of worldliness to those who have not learned all that is meant in the words of the Psalmist, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." These different classes are all ready to take up the cry against the Church, and turn with wistful hope to those who offer them the prospect of a nobler and more devout life than any of the Churches can produce.

What may at first sight seem more surprising, but

will be found on closer examination to be quite as natural, is that those who are themselves deeply affected by the spirit of the world are, nevertheless, ready to protest against the worldliness of the Church, and to catch at the promises of those who set before them a truer ideal. They are secretly conscious of their own shortcomings, and are glad enough to find some way of mitigating, if they cannot wholly escape, the condemnation which their own hearts have pronounced on themselves. They try to serve two masters; they cannot disobey the laws of fashion, and yet they are desirous to maintain the form, and more than the form, of godliness; and the idea of effecting a compromise by cultivating a religion specially unctuous and devout is peculiarly alluring to them. The vital power of godliness, as seen in resolute self-denial, is not acceptable. They will not forsake the pomps and vanities which, at heart, they feel to be opposed to an earnest and consistent religious life, but they can attend those meetings for special religious refreshment which Brethren, and those who are closely allied to the Brethren, cultivate, in order to supply the melancholy deficiency in the teachings and influences of the Churches.

It is not to be supposed that men of this type have any intention of imitating the real excellence of the Brethren. Theirs is a kind of saintliness which is only to be expected in a select and higher class of Christians, to which these men do not aspire or profess to belong. But they seem to suppose that there is some virtue in the mere admiration of these loftier Christian graces and the association with those by whom they are developed. At least, they may be led to a confession of their own imperfection, and get some benefit from contact with

Christians of this order. They have found them the possessors of a higher spiritual life, and communion with them must certainly be something very much more elevating in influence than attendance at services, where there is such a worldly display of intellect, or so constant an enforcement of those common duties of life above which saints naturally soar.

Perhaps but few of this class actually unite themselves to the Brethren, but they serve to extend their reputation and increase their influence. Probably they know little and care less about the special features of the system, but they are impressed by what appears to them the exceptional piety of the men, with which they are continually comparing that of other Christians to the disadvantage of the latter. A religion which has its Bible-readings in drawing-rooms, which concerns itself about fanciful interpretations of Scripture, and especially with the study of prophecy and theories of the pre-millennial advent, is much more to their taste than a religion which goes down among men with the one thought of lifting them up to God; which raises its testimony for truth when truth is most unpopular, and when he who would be loyal to its claims must take up his cross; which is not afraid of rough work and hard battle, and which, instead of dreaming about the coming of the Lord, works under the belief that this is the day of the Lord, that He is here in our midst to-day, and that the duty of His servants is to proclaim His kingdom and gather men under His rule. These two types of religion are fundamentally different in conception and in aim, and that which may be described as the pietistic has, paradoxical as it may appear, undoubted attraction for many who do not share its raptures or cultivate any of its purer

ambitions, but who find in what are regarded as its peculiarly spiritual exercises a sedative that calms a conscience sometimes troubled about the neglect of commonplace duties, or about the continual concessions to the spirit of fashion and the world. It is much easier to dissect a text than to conquer a sin, to give an occasional hour to religious fellowship than to yield the entire heart and life to the rule of Christ, to discuss various renderings of Scripture than to contend for the Scripture law of righteousness in opposition to the interests or the passion of the hour, to sit in judgment on the errors of Churches and individuals than to fight a solitary battle with self for the casting out of some real evil that is troubling the soul, and marring all its beauty and spoiling all its service.

It is not intended to depreciate the value of the internal and what may be considered the more spiritual side of the Christian life. How far earnest work and faithful testimony for Christ may themselves be means of spiritual culture it is not necessary here to inquire, although it may be maintained, with some degree of confidence, that in their absence there will be no vigorous and healthy growth of Christian character. It must, however, be fully recognized that every soul has need of the refreshment, the renewing, the stimulus to be derived from the communion of saints. It is true, also, that there are Christians who are by nature of a more contemplative spirit, and who find their work rather in the strengthening of those who have hard battles to fight than in fighting them themselves, and their service may be as necessary and valuable as that of the combatants themselves. It becomes a very different thing when the sterner duty is treated as though it were not incumbent,

and its discharge is regarded as a sign of imperfect Christian character, if indeed it be admitted that there is in it any Christian element. Very pleasant but very mischievous also is such a theory for those who desire a religion which will speak only comfortable words, who are so fond of dwelling on the precious promises of the gospel that they forget it has precepts also, whose one craving is for assurances of their own safety and eternal happiness, and who love these seasons of spiritual fellowship with a select circle of friends, because of the soothing influence on their own minds. The result, however, is not happy. What they want, in truth, is not to be soothed, but to be quickened and stimulated; unhappily the smooth words which are spoken to them foster their satisfaction with themselves and their discontent with all others. They catch up the cant against sects and systems, and become so beautifully unsectarian that they lose all care for the assertion of any principle or the progress of any institution. They are not prepared to unite with the Brethren, but they are spoiled for other service, and are idlers and grumblers, given to cavilling criticism, if they do not become actual troublers of the Churches to which they may still nominally belong.

V.

The attractions of the Brethren for this class are no doubt increased by the social position of many of the sect. The question suggests itself as to how long a people of the sturdy independence of the English race will allow themselves to be overawed by a title, or dazzled by the glitter of uniform and ribbons. They

are conscious that the tendency is miserably contemptible; they label it by ugly names, such as toadyism and tuft-hunting; they ridicule it in speech and writing, and yet they practise it without any sense of humiliation. It is never more offensive than when it intrudes into the Church of Christ, and dishonours the Master by suggesting in acts, if not in words, that He is specially honoured by the homage of some worldly magnate. But, alas, it is not difficult to find traces of its presence in most of our communities, and it can hardly be questioned that to it Brethrenism has been indebted for much of the success it has achieved. It is not the religion of the poor, but of those in easy circumstances—men reclaimed from the ungodliness or the vice of fashionable circles, professional men, or military and naval officers and aristocrats, who have lost their attachment to the State Church, but are unwilling to identify themselves with any thing so vulgar as Dissent. We are told, "Unlike other sects, they originated, not with the lower or middle class of society, but they can enrol among their leaders gentlemen of the learned professions, esquires, baronets, and even peers of the realm." This fact will impress many minds, but it is scarcely the origin which is most desirable for a religious movement, or one that gives a promise of the widest success and the most enduring vitality. For the time it has given an *eclat* which produces a great effect on those who look chiefly at outward appearances, to whom the preaching of a noble lord must be a special marvel, and who will love their religion all the more if it brings them into friendly relations with some who belong to the charmed circles of aristocracy and fashion. A Bible-reading in a drawing-room has attractions for Christians of this type which a prayer-meeting in an attic could

never possess, and even heresy itself loses some of its repulsiveness when it can point to men of social distinction as its friends and champions. But this advantage is not secured without compensating drawbacks. If some are attracted, a large number are repelled by a system which specially commends itself to men of rank or leisure. The working power of all our Churches is to be found among the middle classes and the intelligent operatives; and though they are ready enough to welcome the aid of those in a higher social position, perhaps too ready to regard it as a kind of condescension, they are not likely to be carried away by any of the fancies of a religious dilettantism. Among them the Brethren have made few converts. These classes, without whose accession no religious system can ever wield an enduring influence, are protected from the aggressions of this new propaganda by their clear grasp of scriptural principles, by the healthy tone of spiritual feeling which results from the hard struggle for daily life, by their occupation in the practical work of the Church, and last, but not least, by a shrewd common-sense, which tears in pieces the webs of speculation which a misdirected ingenuity is continually weaving.

The question, however, presents itself, What is there in Plymouth Brotherism which is attractive to the religious section of the more aristocratic class? In attempting to answer this it must be kept in mind that the converts are principally made from members of the Established Church. They are individuals who have been bitterly disappointed in their own Church. Filled with enthusiasm and ardour, they hoped to find sympathy and co-operation from their clergy and other friends, but instead they have met with that cold and

studied moderation which, in the eyes of its most ardent defenders, is the peculiar glory of the National Church. Or they have been thrown into association with representatives of the "Catholic" school, and have been horrified by their scarcely disguised Romanism. They long to be free from the fetters of ecclesiasticism and routine; they crave a more primitive simplicity and a truer spirituality in worship; they are offended with the worldliness of Erastianism as much as with the anti-Christian tendency of Ritualism; they resent the control of the State in Church affairs, and, as the result of all, they secede. But it is one thing to leave an Establishment in which there is so much they disapprove, and another to unite themselves with a Dissenting sect. Dissent is to them a synonym for vulgarity, for Radicalism, and, in fact, for all that is most offensive to the perfect taste of a high-bred member of society. They are extremely ignorant of its interior life, but they have been taught that in it is all the evil and none of the good belonging to the Established Church, and they eschew association with it as though it would be a discredit to their name and lineage. If they enter Dissenting Churches, they must conform to their regulations, and even show a certain deference to their pastors, who, as they have always understood, are men of little learning and less breeding. But here among the Brethren is exactly what they need—the life without the vulgarity, the absence of the forms and restraints which have been so distasteful in the old system, and which are certainly not likely to be more acceptable when they are of a ruder character and carried out with more trenchant severity, and the absence of an official class whose assumed superiority is offensive to men who have thrown off the yoke of the Holy Catholic Church

and its priests, and are not disposed to submit themselves to the teachers or officers of a conventicle.

It is easy to see how these feelings may have operated to an extent of which their subjects are themselves unconscious. But, considering the position of the Established Church during the last half-century, it is not surprising that some of its more devout and resolute Protestant members have been moved to secede from its communion, and remembering what the relations between the Church and Dissent are, and the sentiment in relation to all Dissenting Churches which prevails in aristocratic circles, it is not surprising that seceders from that class of society should eschew the older forms of Nonconformity and ally themselves with a party at whose head are those who have been trained in the same principles and amid the same associations as themselves, and who, though they may disapprove of its constitution and working, at least do not enrol themselves among its active enemies, and would not engage in any aggressive efforts for the overthrow even of that State institution to which on principle they object.

It may be suggested, indeed, that, had Dissenting Churches been more full of spiritual life, they would have attracted the elements thus thrown off from the Establishment, and that the rise of the new sect is due as much to their want of true fervour as to the corruptions of the State Church. It, no doubt, affords matter for very serious self-examination on the part of those Churches as to whether there is any foundation for such a charge. The statement is continually made, but it is not quite so easy to sustain it. Of course Plymouth Brethren would endorse it, for they declaim against the evil that is in all the Churches, and attack all with an

impartial vehemence. But their undiscriminating violence goes far to destroy the force of their accusations. Dissenting Churches are far from being perfect, but any candid observer who will properly estimate the difficulties against which they have everywhere to contend, the extremely adverse conditions under which they have had to maintain a struggle for existence, the constant and often heavy pressure on their material resources, and the no less severe strain put on their moral force and endurance, and who will then measure the work they have done, both at home and abroad, will be slow to arrive at the conclusion that they have been so cold and feeble, so worldly and unspiritual, as necessarily to repel those who, having been driven from the Establishment by their disgust with formalism, wanted only a life of a more real, deep, and pervading earnestness. That they did not attract the class of seceders referred to is a fact; but whether it is one that tells to their discredit is another question. At all events, nothing would be more unjust than to accept the views of Plymouth Brethren in relation to any part of the Christian world.

It may be frankly confessed that the spirituality to which the Brethren aspire is not ordinarily coveted by Nonconformists. The religion of the two parties is different in type, and it was therefore quite natural that those who desired the one should not ally themselves with Churches which cultivated the other. But it may also be added that, if Nonconformity had attracted a party with the peculiarities characteristic of the Plymouth Brethren, it would not have been the power that it is in England to-day, nor would it have been able to render the same service that it has done in the cause of Christian truth and liberty. There are certain apparent

resemblances between the Brethren and other Nonconformists, but the differences are much more marked and vital. They are as much Dissenters as are Congregationalists. We alike believe in the spiritual nature of the Church; we equally hold that the assumption by the State of any authority in the kingdom of Christ is an invasion of His prerogative. Nevertheless between the two parties a great gulf is fixed. There are very few who go from us to them; and there are equally few who come from them to us.

The idea of the Ritualists that Congregationalists (and the same may be said for the Methodists and Baptists) are losing their young people to the Brethren is one of the merest fancies that ever deluded an ecclesiastical imagination. The change may seem easy and natural, but it is so only in appearance. We are divided by a radical difference in the mode of looking at Christian truth—a difference as to the spiritual ideal and as to the mode in which it is to be pursued; a difference as to the standard of right and as to the mode of its application; a difference as to the exact position of Scripture and as to the mode of its interpretation; a difference as to the nature of the universal Church and as to the purpose it has to fulfil in the world. There may be even deeper theological differences than these, but these are sufficient to explain how it is that seceders from the Anglican Church, convinced of the unscriptural nature of the Establishment, and desirous to form a Church at once spiritual in its idea and independent in its rule, established a new sect instead of uniting themselves with communities which had always maintained these very principles, and in maintaining them had incurred no little obloquy and opprobrium. Despite these

essential points of agreement, it is doubtful whether there is not less sympathy between Congregationalists and Plymouth Brethren than there is between the Anglican Church and either of these two classes of Dissenters.

VI.

What is it that the Brethren offer to those who unite with them? Is there some hitherto unknown truth which they have discovered in the Bible, and for which they ask the faith of men? Or are there some points neglected in the pressure of controversy between different sects which they have rescued from their undeserved obscurity and restored to their proper place in the theological system? Have they vindicated some rights of Christian people ignored and trampled under foot for centuries? Or have they developed some higher form of Christian work or administration? Above all, have they given the world some truer and loftier conception of the gospel itself, raised the standard of evangelical requirements, furnished new and striking illustrations of spiritual heroism worthy to be put by the side (we will not speak of deeds of ancient date) of such an exhibition of principle as was given by the four hundred ministers of the Church of Scotland, when they left the Church of their fathers and of their own affections as an act of loyal service to truth? He would be a bold man who ventured to answer these questions in the affirmative. There is nothing in the system that is calculated to produce such results. It is a protest against evil rather than a testimony on behalf of the right. It avowedly neglects the reform of the world as a work which does not belong to the Church of Christ. Its aim

is to effect a separation more entire and complete between its adherents and the world, not to fill the world with the spirit of the gospel as the leaven leavens the barrel of meal into which it is cast. Negations and protests rather than positive teachings and diligent services are its chief business, and it would be little short of the marvellous if those who were occupied in this perpetual criticism manifested any high nobility of character. Enthusiasm, self-devotion, courage, all the qualities which go to make up heroism, are called forth by great principles which appeal to the loftiest sentiments of the soul, not by a bitter antagonism to some hated errors.

It is not denied that there are Plymouth Brethren, or some, at all events, who are more or less allied with them, who cultivate active goodness, as well as that spiritualism by which the party is specially distinguished. In all Churches there are men better than their creeds and systems, but the business of the student is with the systems, and not with the individual men. The struggle against the error and tyranny of Rome is not to be abandoned or relaxed because there have been found among its priests saintly men; and the testimony against the dividing and disturbing influence of the Brethren is not to be silenced because there are among them men of rare beauty of character, and some who, in disregard of the avowed principles of their party, take their place in the aggressive work of the Church. These exceptions, be they many or few, do not alter the teachings of Mr. Darby and his followers, nor can they change the fact that the work of the sect is aggressive against the Church rather than against the unconverted and the unbelieving world. The evangelists of other

Churches for the most part discharged functions answering to their name by preaching the gospel to the ignorant and the neglected, but the lay evangelists among the Plymouth Brethren seem to be chiefly engaged in the work of calling Christian professors out of the Churches to which they at present belong "The evangelist," says Mr. Mackintosh, one of their best known leaders, "should go forth from the bosom of the assembly in full fellowship therewith; he should work not only to gather souls to Christ, but also into the assembly, where divinely-gifted pastors might watch over them and divinely-gifted teachers instruct them." That this counsel is carried out in conversation and by means of tracts no one who has any knowledge of the movements of the Brethren needs to have proved. "My dear friend," says one of their tracts, with characteristically unctuous and dogmatic style, "I leave you in God's hands. If what I have told you be truth (and it behoves you to weigh it well) first detach yourself from that which your conscience must tell you is contrary to God's order. . . . And when you have detached yourself from evil, which is the first step, then, and not till then, are you in a position to take the second step. Man may laugh at this as being a step in the dark that may lead nowhere, but faith can laugh at man because it trusts in the living God." The apostle exhorts us to overcome evil with good, and though the injunction has reference to a particular form of evil, all experience teaches that it has a wider range and application. The Brethren have found a more excellent way. Whatever is in the Churches is evil; it is not according to their view, and therefore it is not according to God's order; and their mission is to persuade or beguile men to abandon it in

the hope that something better will afterward supply the void. It is not easy to understand or follow the line of thought by which any man could bring himself to the conviction that his first and chief business is to unsettle the faith of those who have some religion, not to instruct those who have none. But that is the view which the Brethren take of their duty, and which they embody in practice; and, strange to say, they do it professedly in the interests of unsectarianism. As has been pointed out by one of their critics, they make their protest against sects and sectarianism by creating a new sect, the most narrow, bitter, intolerant, and sectarian of any.

VII.

It does not require much penetration to see that their claim is precisely the same as that advanced by the Church of Rome. The assembly is neither more nor less than the Holy Catholic Church under a different name, and the objections which are urged against the one apply in a different way to the other. All existing Churches are more or less mixed in their character, and are, therefore, not to be esteemed as Churches at all. The "assembly," as Mr. Darby chooses to designate his society, is the body of Christ, and its purity is guarded by the presence and presidency of the Holy Ghost in its midst. Now without inquiring how far these magnificent pretensions are borne out by facts, and how far the Plymouth societies have been free from that liability to error which all other communities have experienced, without even referring to the fierce internal controversies in which brother has denounced brother, it is enough to point out that these claims are precisely those which are

advanced by Rome. To realize their monstrous character is enough for any sensible man to condemn them. That Mr. Darby, or Mr. Mackintosh, or Mr. Kelly might have detected errors in the creeds, or evils in the polity and procedure of existing Christian communities, that they might have exhumed truths which had been overlaid or forgotten, was what no enlightened thinker would have been prepared to deny. But when, not content with attempting to supplement the deficiencies or correct the mistakes of others, these men, whose special claims to authority are not very discernible, undertake to assert that they have discovered a Divine order which has been lost to the Church for centuries, and that those only who will conform to it are of the body of Christ, their theory becomes simply incredible, and the assumption of those who advance it excites first surprise, then contempt, finally indignant repudiation.

However it may be veiled, the claim which the Brethren set up means the assertion of infallibility. Wherever it may be vested, and whoever may be its organ, the infallibility of the Church of Rome is not more clearly asserted than that of the new sect of the nineteenth century, with a few adherents scattered here and there, some of whom may have an eminence in piety worthy of all honour, but none of whom have shown any qualitiesw hich made them out as great leaders, still less as dictators of the faith of the Churches. Compared with founders of great theological systems like Calvin, or with successful preachers like Whitefield, or with sagacious organizers like Wesley, or with heroic missionaries like Henry Martyn, or John Williams, or Robert Moffat, or with practical Christian philanthropists like Dr. Guthrie, the greatest of them is a mere

pigmy. Nowhere in their ranks do we find the massive learning of the great theologian, or the inspired enthusiasm of the mighty preacher, or the heroic courage and devotion of the missionary or the martyr. Yet we are invited to see in them a new race of seers or prophets, who if they have not received a new revelation from heaven, have at least had such an increase of light shed upon the old that they are able to perceive the miserable condition of Christendom in ruins, and to point out to its erring and distracted citizens the more excellent way, which all the learning and piety of the centuries had failed to discover.

Perhaps there is no feature in the system so offensive as this. A pretence to infallibility must provoke resistance from all who dissent from its decrees, and fall under its censures. It is so daring an attempt of man to seat himself on the throne of God, and to grasp that power over intellect and conscience which can belong only to God, that every soul in which breathes a spirit of independence rises up in revolt against the usurpation and the tyranny. But infallibility claimed by a Pope who has succeeded to the inheritance of a long line of predecessors, each of whom has laboured to build up the structure of his power; who is seated on a throne resting on venerable precedents, on the usage of centuries, on the submission of multitudes; who is surrounded by all outward symbols of power and majesty, and to whom millions bow down in abject reverence, wears a very different aspect from infallibility claimed for themselves by a few sectaries, without a semblance of evidence to support their claims. It is as respectable and as likely to command respect as similar pretensions on the part of some modern thinkers who, having themselves aban-

doned certain doctrines of the old theology, immediately and confidently pronounce that they are incredible, and that the adherence of men to such views is a sign either of feeble intellect or imperfect culture. How long will it be before men learn the lessons of true charity, and understand that no one can show full loyalty to conscience who is not as willing to respect the principles of others as he is resolute in the maintenance of his own?

VIII.

The Brethren parade before the unwary an array of "recovered truths," of which the Church has been robbed through the centuries by the carelessness, or ignorance, or prejudice of its professed teachers, but which have now been restored to it by the instrumentality and, it must be added, on the authority of the distinguished men with whom the nineteenth century has been blessed, but whose transcendent wisdom has been recognized only by the elect souls of the Assembly. While making an emphatic and indignant protest against calling any man Master on earth, and reproaching those who allow themselves to be described as Calvinists or Wesleyans, they are themselves dominated by the authority of Darby, who is the apostle of the new dispensation, and whose utterances are as decisive as the bulls of Leo XIII. There is, as is well known, a large section of the Brethren who do not recognize the lead of Mr. Darby, and who, on that account, have been excluded from the Assembly, and there are smaller sects with varieties of opinion which it is not possible, even if it were desirable, to trace here. But the exclusive Brethren, as they are called, are the representatives of Brethrenism

in its full development, and among them opposition to Mr. Darby is a sufficient ground for separation.

The recusants who were identified with "Bethesda," and of whom Mr. Müller and Mr. Craik were the leaders, are the objects of a pious hate, and have been followed with a persistent malignity, which proves that the wise man was right when he said, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." With whom the rights of this fierce, protracted, and apparently irreconcilable controversy lie, how far the open Brethren are more liberal than their "exclusive" opponents, what are the relations of the two parties respectively to other Christians, are points far too minute to be discussed in a rapid sketch like this, the object of which is to examine the principles which are at the root of the system, not to deal with any of its internal questions. United at first by a common dislike of a hierarchy, a common disbelief in all Churches, and a common desire for Christian communion, they isolated themselves from all other Christians and then found before long that the same divisive forces were at work still, and effected another schism in their own ranks.

The principles with which they originally started are held by both sections, though with modifications. But it is the more compact, vigorous, and aggressive body, of which Mr. Darby is the head, that must be taken as representative, and by it the system must be judged as to its character, its tendencies, and its full results. So far as any of the divisions of the party differ from him, and especially so far as they relax any of his exclusiveness, they have not yet attained the ideal of the Assembly. It is extremely necessary to make and remember this qualification, lest injustice be done to good men, whose

sympathy with the Brethren is little more than an interest in their type of piety, and possibly only in some individuals with whom they have been brought into close fellowship, and does not imply any approval of their peculiarities. There are, no doubt, men who, very unfortunately for themselves and the world, have contracted a distaste for the ordinary life and work of the Churches, and think that the only course they can adopt in order to remedy the defects of which they complain in the Christianity of the day is to withdraw to the retired heights of spiritual contemplation. It is not the course of practical wisdom, it is not that which has the sanction of Him whose prayer was not that His disciples should be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from the evil; but it has attractions for a small class of minds who do not like the fret of active life, and the mechanism and routine to some extent inseparable from organization, who shrink from conflict, or perhaps do not relish even the necessity of that self-repression necessary to all co-operation with others. The mysticism of the Brethren attracts them, but they have no idea of adopting their exclusive theories, still less of being bound by the fanciful and whimsical interpretations of Scripture which are enforced by the authority of Mr. Darby. There is a wide distinction between this religious dilettantism and real Plymouthism, though they are continually associated together. The former is, after all, little more than idiosyncrasy, the latter is a distinct revolt against all Churches and systems.

At the root of this is undoubtedly the pretence to infallibility. What else can be the meaning of the claim that the Assembly is the true body of Christ, and that it is the duty of all its members to gather Christians out

of the corrupt communities to which they at present belong? It is not simply that individuals, feeling that their spiritual aspirations are not met, nor their ideal of a Christian realized, in any existing community, resolve on the establishment of a Church on a more scriptural basis. Older Protestant Churches have no more reason to object to their taking a course like this than had the Church of Rome to condemn and do its utmost to suppress the action of the Reformers. Protestants who justify the action of Luther would certainly have no ground on which to object to the endeavour of Mr. Darby and others to establish a Christian society on what they regard as sound scriptural principles. Though they were so to distort and caricature great truths as to prevent their recognition even by their most devoted and constant supporters; though their representation of Christianity were so one-sided and imperfect as to become little better than a mere travesty, still they would but have exercised their own Christian liberty in seeking thus to embody their particular views in a religious system. To their own Master they must stand or fall; and it is not for other Christians, however they may differ, to resent the independent action of these new sectaries. In a sense we are all sectaries, and in truth the more Catholic the spirit that we cherish, the more ready shall we be to admit that our Church is not co-extensive with the one true Church of Christ, and can at best only aspire to be a branch of His great family. There is nothing so miserably sectarian as the boast of any company, small or great, that theirs is the Church, and that all who dissent from them are sects. It is this exclusiveness, involving as it does an essential claim to infallibility, and placing their sect on a level

with the Romish Church, that gives distinctive character to the Plymouth Brethren, and justifies other Christians in regarding them with distrust, and meeting their proselyting efforts with determined resistance.

The system which they promulgate is so uncertain and varying, so full of crude ideas and undigested principles, as almost to elude anything like searching criticism. In its theological principles it is an exaggeration and debasement of the teachings of the Evangelical school in the Church of England, with some of its features developed in unnatural proportion, and many of its corrections and qualifications absent, and with other and worse principles, which are logically irreconcilable with its fundamental theory, introduced. It would require a skilful theologian to mark the line which separates the ethical teaching of the Brethren from Antinomianism. Their views as to the presence and presidency of the Holy Ghost in their assemblies and the secret rapture of the saints are marked by a decided mysticism, and yet on the other hand they have put forth theories relative to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ which tend in a rationalistic direction. In short, their system is a strange *mélange*, without any principle of unity to pervade it, such as might naturally be expected from the labours of men who, without any pre-eminent original endowments and with a sublime contempt for all forms of human culture and learning, have undertaken to translate the Bible anew, to interpret it according to their own private ideas, to develope thus a distinct system of theology, and then to insist that it is Christianity. Mr. Spurgeon said, "I should have been surprised if I did not feel myself prepared to hear any monstrosities from persons tinctured with the gall of Plymouth Brethrenism.

Concerning that sect, much as I love and respect many of its members, I dare not say less than this, that God alone knows what they will teach to-morrow, for they seem to be given up to the imaginations of their own vainglorious minds, to concoct and devise delusions without number." What else could be anticipated from those whose ideas in relation to the Spirit of God, if they mean anything, mean nothing less than a perpetual inspiration, and who are fed in this belief in their own spiritual wisdom by the implicit deference of credulous followers, who eagerly seize upon every fresh novelty of their self-chosen guides as though it were a revelation from heaven.

IX.

As to the practical Christianity which they develope, it may be admitted that, if the personal excellence of a large number of its adherents could condone the errors of a system, the Brethren have very much to plead on their own behalf. It is the utmost that can be said in favour of the sect, and it is right that it should be said with the more emphasis, since some who have withdrawn from the society have been specially severe in condemnation of its internal procedure. But after impartially weighing their statements, the conclusion reached by an unprejudiced mind would probably be that the men with whom they had been associated were compassed about with human infirmities like others, with an additional spice of intolerance, approaching at times even to violence, such as might be expected from their peculiar theories and the special conditions under which they sought to reduce them to practice. Men struggling for a position so exceptional have peculiar temptations and difficulties,

and charity would teach us to make allowance for the errors and faults which they may commit without impeaching either their sincerity or their godliness. It is always unfortunate and unsatisfactory when a controversy about systems is degraded into a discussion of the character of individuals. The Brethren have themselves very much to thank if there has been anything of this kind in the discussions relative to their sect. They place themselves in Moses' seat and are not slow to pass judgment upon others, and it cannot be matter of surprise if others in their turn pass judgment upon them. They advance pretensions so lofty that it is certain they will be challenged and the grounds on which they rest closely scrutinized. If their most unpitying censors have been those who formerly were of their own household, this ought to occasion them no surprise, since they have themselves done their utmost to develope that unmerciful and microscopic criticism of which they in their turn have become the victims.

Let it be admitted, however, what all lovers of candour would confess, that among the sect are many who exhibit in a high degree what may be described as a saintly type of piety. They love devout contemplation. They devote themselves to a perpetual study of Scripture, their knowledge of which is often very extensive, even if their interpretations are frequently very fantastic. They engage in works of general benevolence and charity. They are specially anxious to keep themselves unspotted from the world. Two considerations mainly determine the type of their religion, the extraordinary prominence that they assign to the doctrine of the Pre-millennial Advent—a prominence so extreme that they do not hesitate to denounce all who do not preach it as failing

to teach the gospel—and their general view of the sinfulness of the world. The two do to a considerable extent harmonize with each other. Those who live in constant anticipation of a sudden, and it may be early coming of the Lord, are not likely to take a deep interest in the affairs of a dispensation which may speedily end or a world that may soon pass away. Hence a general condemnation of social pleasure, and not of that only, but of political activity, as unworthy of the "children of the kingdom" which is about to be revealed. The Brethren do not shut themselves up in convents or form organized societies laid under vows, but their theory of the world and of the Christian life bears a striking resemblance to that which, in the earlier ages of the Church, developed a sainthood such as that of Anthony or Simeon Stylites, and led sincere though misguided men to forsake the business of life and seek a home in deserts, in dens, and in caves of the earth, in order that they might there find the nearness to God and the spiritual strength necessary to resist the evil which hemmed them in and was continually pressing more closely around them. The mischief done is not so great to-day, because the influence of the theory is not so widespread. Were the Brethren as numerous, and had they as much power in the Church as the votaries of the old monasticism, they would have produced the same neglect of common but paramount duty, the same abstinence from service which needs imperatively to be done, the same retirement from the world on the part of those whose first business is to "serve" their "generation by the will of God," that led to such disastrous results in those earlier days.

Happily the influence of the system has been restricted

within a much more narrow circle, but to the extent of its prevalence it has deprived the Church and the world of many a noble energy which might have been employed in the cause of truth and righteousness, of liberty and of Christian progress. The Christianity which it represents does but weep and sigh for days more blessed; it declaims against error which it does nothing to counteract; it denounces the world, but leaves to others the task of reforming it; it whines out its doleful lamentations over Christendom in ruins, but for those who are attempting in any degree to repair the evil, to free the Church of God from a bondage which the Brethren themselves are the first to reprobate, or to introduce into the regulation of worldly affairs the principles of that kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, they have only censures, misrepresentations, and calumnies. The Christianity that is to do God's work in this world must be made of sterner stuff. For those who are content to tarry among the tents, and occupy themselves mainly in exposing the faults of their brethren who are bearing the brunt of the battle, or in thanking God for the superior piety which prevents them from fighting at all, there can only be words of earnest remonstrance or sincere regret. The battle is joined and the services of every soldier of the Lord are needed. If, however, the Brethren feel that the place of retirement is the place of piety and of honour, we can only say again that to their own Master they stand or fall. God forbid that we should pretend to be their judges, but we protest against their being ours. We can try to understand the feelings by which they are governed, and can sometimes feel that there are elements in their piety which we would fain have imported into that of other communities, but for

ourselves we humbly desire, as God shall give us strength, to cultivate a religion which will not seek to hide itself in nooks and crannies, but will go boldly into the world's conflicts and the world's work, and seek to ennoble the country and to purify the age by leaving in it abundant traces that there have been in its midst men of God.

X.

The Church ideas of the Brethren have been mainly borrowed from other communities, though most of them have been spoiled in the borrowing. Ready as they are to censure Congregationalists, often on points in relation to which Scripture distinctly condemns the attempts of any man, or any body of men, to set up laws by which others are to be governed, they have taken from Congregationalism that idea of a "gathered Church" which is the root of their system; but that idea, as worked out by our Puritan fathers, produced a system that stands in striking contrast to the isolated sectionalism with which the Brethren have made this nineteenth century familiar. There is an extreme and exaggerated Independency which sometimes seems to approximate towards it, but even it has had in it positive elements which have redeemed it from the impotence for all aggressive Christian work by which Plymouthism has been characterized. The selfishness which this extreme Independency might sometimes seem calculated to promote has at all events been counteracted by the robuster piety, the deeper sense of obligations to the nation and to the world, and the more fervid zeal for the conversion of men which has for the most part prevailed amongst its members. Even extreme Independents have never

felt that it was their business to live apart from other men. They have realized their responsibility to be an influence in the midst of society, and to the utmost of their power have sought to fulfil the duty thus imposed upon them. They have gathered men into churches, not for the purpose of spiritual indulgence and luxury, but for the real work of Christian testimony and of Christian conflict.

The theory of the presence of the Spirit in the Church, with the consequent protest against any prepared forms of worship, the Brethren have borrowed from the Society of Friends, but have shown even less consistency and fidelity in practice to the principle than that noble body of Christians. Perhaps they bear a closer resemblance to that society than to any other of our Christian denominations. They agree with them in their rejection of any paid ministry, and in the place which they professedly give to the individual in the ministrations of the Church. They agree with them also in their general view of the presence and direct influence of the Spirit ; but here the resemblance ceases, and a far more serious divergency begins. Should the Society of Friends unfortunately ever cease to exist, they would still leave behind them a record as untarnished and, in many respects, as glorious as that of any section of the Christian Church. Even they, with their ability, their practical judgment, and their generous liberality, have failed to make that impression upon the world which they might otherwise have produced, in consequence of their neglect of certain instruments of usefulness, and especially of that "foolishness of preaching by which it has pleased God to save them that believe." But their work in the nation and in the world is one which any body

of Christians might well envy and emulate. They have been foremost in every struggle for liberty, in every enterprize of philanthropy, in every testimony for righteousness and for peace. They have had their heroes who have gallantly struggled for freedom in dark days of tyranny and oppression ; they have built schools, and worked in the cause of social progress and reform ; they have been amongst the most earnest in their endeavours for the emancipation of the slave, and persistently, through evil report and good report, have proclaimed those great principles of the Gospel which, had they been maintained, would have established the comity of nations, would have given us new and nobler conceptions of heroism and greatness, and would have saved the peoples from such calamities as those which at this moment are filling the heart of England with sadness, and its homes with weeping, and wailing, and sorrow.

No such story can ever be told of the Brethren. No bold and courageous protest on behalf of righteousness and truth has ever been uttered by them. The memories of no great movements for the elevation and improvement of the masses, such as those which were the glory of the Evangelical Revival, will ever wreathe themselves around the story of this pietistic school, which has rather done its utmost to divorce religion from the work of aggressive Christianity and philanthropy. No heroes who have distinguished themselves in that struggle for the right which has to be maintained in all ages, and in the present as much as at any previous period, have ever been reared in their society or throw a lustre around their annals. The world owes them no debt of gratitude, the Church has received from them no impulse to sacrifice or to effort.

They invite us to believe that for nearly eighteen centuries the world was left without a Church. They ask us to ignore all the noble deeds of sacrifice, of suffering, of heroism which were done in the name of Christ and for the glory of the Master. They would have us suppose that even now the result of the work of Christ, after nearly nineteen centuries of experience, is the collection of a little flock; and they would have even its members fold their arms and contemplate with pious self-complacency the conflicts of a world in which truth and error, and good and evil, tyranny and freedom are struggling for the mastery. They proclaim Christendom to be in ruins, and, so far as their efforts are concerned, in ruins it will remain. Not by such an agency as this is sin to be vanquished, the world to be redeemed, and the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ established in its power and in its glory.

LECTURE XI.

METHODISM.

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THE significant expression contained in our Lord's answer to the embassage which had been sent to Him by John, "to the poor the gospel is preached," must certainly be regarded as setting forth the distinctive feature not only of His own teaching, but also of the work which His religion was to do in the world. It was to be, not a system for the education of a few select souls, but for the regeneration of society. That regeneration was to be effected by the preaching of a gospel, and, in order that the work might be effectually done, it was to be preached to the poor. There was no exclusion of the rich or the cultured, or of those in exalted stations and social influence, but they are not named because there would have been nothing new or surprising in the inclusion of these favoured classes. After them had the Gentiles always sought, for them had all religions and philosophies made provision. It was the mass of men which had been neglected, and it was this sad deficiency that the gospel of our Lord was to supply. Its aim was not to separate the wise and the holy from the ungodly and sinners, but to use all who believed its message as instruments by which to win others to the obedience

of faith, and so to carry on, from age to age, the great work of sanctifying humanity.

At the beginning there were but a few who obeyed the Master's call, but He did not hesitate to assure them that they should have the kingdom. A wonderful prevision was that by which He made His appeal to the centuries that were to come, setting up a test by which His claim might be judged from age to age. If the "little flock" had not shown a capacity for dominion over men, had the company died out and left no successors, had their teachings been forgotten or their influence perished, or had it been perpetuated only by small clubs, which were unnoticed and uncared for by the world at large, the Master's words would have condemned Himself, and would have been quoted to-day as evidence of the extent to which a simple-minded enthusiast had been corrupted by success, and intoxicated by the flatteries of the ignorant multitude whom He had fascinated. But His words are being fulfilled every day. The gospel is to-day as it has been through the centuries, a mighty regenerative force. The kingdom is established, and its rule is continually being extended, hindered often by mistakes on the part of the servants of the King, quite as much as by the resistance of His avowed enemies, sometimes growing so secretly that its advance is not perceptible, coming not with observation but with a quiet spiritual force, which the world cannot understand and will not recognize until the results are too manifest to be denied.

A Church which is to live must fully realize that its mission is to be thus aggressive. It does not exist for the sake of keeping up an appropriate religious ceremonial, to be observed at stated intervals by those who

think that the Divine Being ought to be thus honoured, and that a nation which believes in Him should have recognized organs for the expression of its faith and the offering up of its worship. Nor is it designed merely to afford opportunities for communion and self-culture to those who have reached the comfortable persuasion that they are the elect of Heaven. It only fulfils the design of its Divine Founder, and vindicates to the world its right to live when it manifests a power to conquer evil and so to redeem humanity, teaching men the true end of their being, helping them to bear the burdens and sorrows of life, instructing them in high principles, and inspiring in them lofty enthusiasms, and doing it all by leading them to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Church which is able to do this work must command the respect even where it does not secure the allegiance of men. There are systems to-day which are opposed to the most enlightened and powerful tendencies of the age, that have a large measure of popular favour because their teachers are, after their own fashion, and in a way which we should call superstition if not heresy, endeavouring to lift men up out of the slough of vice and wretchedness in which they are vainly struggling. It may be that they are seeking to revive errors which, it was fondly hoped, had died out, to entangle the nation in a yoke of bondage, to restore the dominion of the priesthood; but against all this is placed the fact that they preach the gospel to the poor. Nothing could well be more shallow and inconclusive than such a mode of judging a system, but it would be hopeless to try and set aside such verdicts altogether. Men will admit that any apparent moral gain which is effected by an accession to the power of superstition is

of a somewhat problematical character, but they indulge the hope that the good will remain while the evil will be counteracted by other influences which are abroad, and they give to those who thus work out the aggressive idea of Christianity an honour which they will not accord to a type of religion into which this element does not enter. A Church may talk for ever of the purity of its creeds, the antiquity of its forms, the overwhelming weight of tradition by which its authority is maintained ; it may number in its ranks distinguished scholars, eloquent preachers, saintly men, who prove their goodness by secluding themselves from all contact with the world ; it may build splendid temples, and maintain services that satisfy all the cravings of a devout æstheticism ; but this practical and speculative age will give little heed to its many high qualities, if it is not able to prove that it is doing some of the hard work of the generation. The Church is regarded by the majority of men—and in our judgment rightly so—as being intended to perpetuate in the world the spirit and work of its Lord, and to be among men as Christ Himself : "to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." A Church which realizes this ideal, even in imperfect measure, must be a power.

I.

The true secret of the success of Methodism in this country is that it has kept this point steadily in view. It has been a great evangelistic and missionary agency in the nation—in its original inception, in truth, it hardly desired to be anything more—and in its methods, won-

derfully adapted to do this special work effectively. As it has developed, its leaders have naturally given to it more of a distinctly ecclesiastical character, and have shown extraordinary spirit and energy in seeking to remove any reproach that attached to it because of defects in the culture of its ministry, the freedom of its polity, or the tone of its general arrangements. The progress of Methodism in adapting itself to the more cultured classes on the one side, and to the workers of more free and independent spirit on the other, is very remarkable. But, after all, the position which it holds in the country is due to mainly its extraordinary capacity for meeting the religious wants of the masses. It has constantly kept before them the truths they needed to hear, and it has taught them in a language the "common" people could understand, it has clothed them with a passionate fervour by which their hearts were stirred. Rough, and sometime rude, as the eloquence of many of their preachers once was, their words reached the hearts and consciences of multitudes who would have listened only with gaping wonder to the polished discourse in which there might be profounder thought, and certainly more chastened language, but which lacked the passion, the plainness, and the point found in the appeals of the unlettered Methodist. But the work of Methodism has never been supposed to end with the conversion of sinners. Perhaps its special distinction has rather been its marvellous skill in welding its converts into a compact body. Its aim has been to make every one of its members a worker, and in order to do this, to surround him with warm and genial influences calculated to strengthen his faith and stimulate his zeal. Men received into the society are no more allowed to feel themselves

alone. They meet with brethren with whom they interchange spiritual confidences, they have a leader whose special care is to watch and guide them, they have their sphere of duty assigned to them ; in short, they are made to feel themselves members of a commonwealth to whose strength they contribute, by whose force they are largely sustained, and in whose government they have of late years been allowed still more largely to share.

All this means very close organization, and to numbers organization is at once a horror and a peril. That it has many attendant evils would, perhaps, be generally admitted ; but it must be granted at the same time that in the special work which Methodism has undertaken it has numerous advantages. The classes to which it appeals love sympathy, find pleasure in social gatherings for fellowship, are full of ardour and activity, and like orderly arrangement. The extraordinary success of the "Salvation Army" affords abundant illustration of these remarks. It has attracted crowds of adherents by the skill shown in taking advantage of this kind of feeling among the people. Passionate appeals have aroused slumbering consciences ; men and women have sought and professed to find peace ; they have then been enrolled in the army, and gradually detailed for distinct duty. All this has captivated multitudes of the ignorant class among whom the work has been prosecuted. It may be said the teaching is unsound, the sentiment engendered unhealthy, and that if any good has been effected it will not be enduring ; but that does not affect the point, which simply is the attraction of this kind of organization for a particular class of minds. And if the methods succeed in winning men from infidelity and vice, there are not, it is to be hoped, many who would

be willing to condemn some faults of vulgarity and extravagance. There are few, if any, who would say to-day what Sydney Smith said in relation to the work of the Methodists seventy years ago: "If the choice rested with us, we should say, Give us back our wolves again, restore our Danish invaders, curse us with any evil but the evil of a canting, deluded, and Methodistical populace." The sentiment which prevails at present is the direct opposite of all this. With the exception of a small minority, men of all varieties of opinion, not even excluding many sceptics, would say, "Whatever the methods by which the work is done, if any of our people can be rescued from the intellectual and moral degradation in which multitudes are found, we must and will rejoice."

It will ever be to the glory of Methodism that it has done this work to an extent which no other denomination has equalled. It has always kept alive, and keeps alive still, two great ideas—the fellowship of Christians and the missionary character of the Church. It does not merely teach that a Church should send out missionaries, but that it should never cease to be a missionary itself. Some of those who claim to be specially conservative of Methodist principles and traditions complain that the society has not remained faithful to its own ideal, and has left, first, to Primitive Methodists, and more recently to the Salvation Army and similar organizations, the work in which Wesley and his immediate successors were specially interested. Whether or not there be any ground for reproach on this score, there has undoubtedly been considerable change. But the change was inevitable. It is simply impossible for men of culture to employ the same forms of address, or

perhaps even to have recourse to the same arguments or appeals, which are perfectly natural to fervid but uneducated speakers. It is not usual, and indeed hardly possible, for men of thought, who have looked on all sides of a subject, to speak with the same decision and dogmatism which those of more limited knowledge, who have only looked at one point, are pretty sure to adopt. The thought and language of the untaught and unrefined are as different from those of men of learning and taste as though the two classes were of different nations and spoke in different tongues. Educated men may use even more plainness of speech than the uncultured, for perfect simplicity is the best proof of the highest culture. But there is a deeper difference than that of mere dialect, there is an essential difference of conception, and he must have a singular genius who is able so far to detach himself from his own ordinary modes of thinking and so to place himself in the position of another class, as to enter into their ideas, and deal with them on their own ground. As the general culture of the community has advanced, it is to be feared that the gap between what are considered the respectable classes and the multitudes, especially in our larger cities, has been continually widening. Though Methodism may not have abandoned any of its old functions, it may on this account have produced fewer men who are able to perform them effectively, and it may be that converts from these classes may be better qualified, from a subtle sympathy with them, which nothing but personal experience can give, to do the kind of work in which the earlier Methodists were so successful. Whether it be the fault of the Methodist leaders or of these "free lances" that the

latter have not been incorporated in the regular army, or whether there is any fault on either side, are points that need not interrupt our discussion. What is important is that Methodism, amid all changes of position and circumstance, still retains its marked original characteristic. It began its course as an agency for converting men, and so it remains to this hour.

II.

The contrast between Methodists and Plymouth Brethren is extremely marked, and all the more striking because of various points of resemblance which seem likely to draw them into sympathy. There is in both a strong mystic vein, but in Methodism it is blended with an equally strong practical element, which prevents it from running to the extravagance and excess we find among the Brethren. There can hardly be more decisive evidence of the value of active service, and of the principle from which that service springs, than is supplied by the history of these two bodies. Methodism may be too self-contained, too intent on merely denominational ends, too prone to a policy which, to the outside world at least, savours of selfishness; but, at all events, it is active and energetic, and its usefulness has been so conspicuous that it now meets with appreciative respect among the very classes by whom it was once most severely condemned.

Seventy years ago Sydney Smith, speaking of Methodists and missionaries, talked of "routing out a nest of consecrated cobblers and bringing to light such a perilous heap of trash as we were obliged to wade through;" and *The Edinburgh Review* was not ashamed to publish

the unmannerly as well as unchristian railings of the cynic, clothed in the robes of a minister of the gospel, who was then a canon of St. Paul's. "We are quite ready," he said, in the great literary organ of the day, "if any fair opportunity offer, to defend it (national Christianity) to the best of our ability, from the tiger-spring of infidelity; and we are quite determined, if we can prevent such an evil, that it shall not be eaten up by the nasty and noisome vermin of Methodism." The feeling which inspired these savage denunciations, in which the writer simply gave the reins to passionate bigotry, only reflects the sentiment which till a comparatively recent date prevailed in the Anglican Church. Methodism was a delusion, a fanaticism, a kind of religious mania, to which no quarter was to be shown. Bitterly have the rulers of the Establishment rued the infatuation and short-sightedness which cast out of its fold the force which might have sufficed to give it that hold on popular feeling for which it now longs in vain. To-day its ingenious champions plead that Wesley was always a devoted adherent of the Church, that so far from contemplating any secession from it, he held Dissent and all its works in utter abomination, and that if his followers would act in harmony with his spirit, they ought eagerly to welcome the overtures of the Church, which, conscious of the mistakes of a century ago, is now eager to receive them and adopt their agencies as part of its own machinery.

But even now the prelate most anxious for such a reunion proves, even in the character of his overtures, how little he understands the spirit of the men with whom he has to deal, or appreciates their relative positions. The idea still is that it would be an act of

grace and condescension on the part of the State Church thus to receive its erring sons and utilize their energy and devotion for its own purposes. If there is to be any repentance for the past, it is not to be on the part of the Church which failed to recognize and honour the work of God and treated His servants as though they had been emissaries of Satan, but on that of the outcasts who, having gathered rich spoil of spiritual influence and of converts, are now graciously to be permitted to lay it humbly at the feet of the rulers whose harshness forced their fathers into exile. There is, perhaps, not much more of real liking for Methodism itself now than there was in the time of its early struggles. But its power has made itself felt, and the Established Church would be willing to use its forces. The magnanimity of such proposals is perfectly understood by those to whom they are addressed. They deserve notice only as an indirect testimony to the marvellous power which Methodism has wielded and is exercising still as an active missionary agency.

III.

Methodism may be variously regarded, as descriptive of a particular religious tendency, or of a great ecclesiastical body. In the former sense it is employed to describe a religion which lays stress upon spiritual experiences; which believes in a Divine life in the soul of man; which shows its care for sound morals by laying the foundation for them in spiritual motives and affections; which deals with the heart, and by it governs the conduct; which, not satisfied with being correct, aims also at being devout; which intensifies all conviction, ennobles all principle, and suffuses all life with the glow

of pure emotion. Its fervour appears to its enemies fanaticism, its inward feelings as mystic fancies, its holy aspirations and purposes as evidences of an intellect whose balance is disturbed, if its capacity for forming a sound judgment be not utterly gone. This was the sense in which the word was used by Sydney Smith, who classed in one category "Arminian and Calvinistic Methodists, and the Evangelical clergymen of the Church of England," and included in one sweeping condemnation "these three classes of fanatics, not troubling to point out the finer shades and nicer discriminations of lunacy, but treating them all as in the general conspiracy against common sense and rational orthodox Christianity." Like numbers of others who will sometimes describe the whole company by the name of Calvinists, as here they are branded as Methodists, the Canon recogizes no vital difference in the theology of its different sections. He is so far right, that they are one in insisting on a religion of the spirit and not of the letter; of the affections and the conscience, and not only of outward show and ceremony; of faith and love, not of propriety, prudence, and respectability; in short, a religion of which God is the Author, and whose strength is sustained by a living communion with Him, not one which consists in conformity to some human precedent and obedience to mere human law.

This is the Evangelical theory of Christian life and character, and this is the foundation of Methodism as an ecclesiastical system. It is in that sense that it presents itself for our consideration. Spiritual affinities unite the classes on whom the Canon of St. Paul's impartially poured his contempt, but they are separated by theological and ecclesiastical differences. Methodists

and Congregationalists agree so far as to hold that personal godliness is the essential qualification for Church fellowship. The modes of working out that idea differ, and, indeed, it may not be held in precisely the same form, but the fundamental principle is essentially the same. As systems of polity, however, they differ not in mere detail, but in their whole idea of organization. Methodism is a great confederation, the separate parts of which are guided by the central force. In Congregationalism the central force is the product only of the separate units, and acts only in obedience to their will. The force of compactness, unity of purpose, promptitude in action, concentration of strength on particular points, in fact, all that belongs to discipline and well-regulated movement, belongs to Methodism. The power and vitality which reside in freedom and independence—the spring of elasticity, the variety of individualism, and its capacity of adaptation to differing conditions and circumstances—are on the side of Congregationalism. The two systems are fitted to work on parallel lines and in friendly co-operation, while occasions for antagonism certainly do not arise out of the nature of things. There are some who work best as part of a great organization, and at the opposite pole there are others who seem as though they could work with no one but themselves, and occasionally find difficulty even in that. Between these extremes are innumerable varieties, some inclining to individualism, and others to organized action. It is to the latter that Methodism makes its appeal, and it has been made with such effect that the system—which is one of the youngest in Christendom—is one of the most vigorous and successful, with no signs of diminished vitality or impaired force.

IV.

Under this term Methodism must be included not only the parent society, of which John Wesley was the founder, but various branches which have sprung from it, and cognate organizations constructed on the same general ideas. It is interesting to observe that if, with the rise in culture and status, the Wesleyan Methodists have somewhat changed their original character, or at all events entered upon the cultivation of other fields than those in which the success of the founders of the society was achieved, there have always been others sharing the same feelings, stirred by the same holy ambitions, and using the same kind of instruments, pressing on to fill the places which might otherwise have been left vacant. Methodism includes a group of societies, all of which have the same characteristics, and in the main hold by the same principles, and work on the same plans. The theology of all is marked by evangelical simplicity; they alike preach with fervour and directness a message of salvation addressed to humanity at large; they have the same general principles of polity, and they all trust largely to the influence of social Christianity in the meeting for fellowship as an important instrument for consolidation and extension. The work of all must be taken into account when any attempt is made to estimate the extent of the dominion over which the influence of Methodism reaches, or to appraise the service which it is rendering to Christianity.

The story of its progress is little less than a romance. Little more than a century ago its first conference was held, and to-day it counts its adherents by millions; it

has its settlements in every part of the world; it is universally recognized as one of the most potent religious forces not only in this country, but in that Greater Britain which is peopled by the English race and dominated by English ideas. Though it has had in the course of its history to contend with the internal difficulties which were certain to arise in a system offering so many openings for conflict between different authorities, or between authority itself and individualism — establishing so absolute a rule, yet depending so much upon democratic sentiment, and necessarily fostering it — still its progress has been steady and continuous. From year to year, and from generation to generation, the same unity of aim and concentration of effort has been preserved. There have been changes in Methodism, though these have been gradually made; but the Methodists are to-day in the same spirit and resolution as they were in the days of John Wesley. They have never sought to weaken the influence or attract to themselves the members of other Churches, but they have with untiring perseverance set themselves to extend the power of their own. They have achieved the success which seldom fails to reward earnest devotion to a great object when it has at its command such force as the society has always been able to supply.

The statistics of Methodism are surprising in themselves, and amply sufficient to confute the shallow theory which regards it as a mere outburst of religious fanaticism. Had this been true it must have lost its reproductive force long since, even if it had not ceased to exist altogether. It is assumed that a religious revival will expend its fire within a comparatively

limited period, and if it have no force on which to rely except spiritual excitement, the probability is that the conclusion will be verified. Even where there is the inspiration of the loftiest motives and the employment of the wisest methods for the diffusion of great spiritual truths, the opportunities for the introduction of unworthy sentiment are so numerous, and the passions to which it appeals so strong and so easily awakened, that even the best and purest societies are apt to lose something of their pristine simplicity and strength. The leader passes away and no one is found to perpetuate his influence and prosecute his work; the intensity and singleness of aim characteristic of first love are lost; selfish ambitions and jealousies arise through the intrusion of unworthy associates who have not caught the spirit of the enterprize; an organization which owed its original power to its freedom from conventional restraint becomes conservative in its turn, and repressive of the very forces to which it is indebted for its own success, and so days of weakness and reaction follow the glorious period of early success. The golden is followed by a silver age, and it is fortunate if the cycle be not completed by one of brass or of iron. The test of a vitality dependent upon a spring that lies far deeper than mere sensation is to be found in the capacity of resurrection from those depressing influences which are sure to come.

Christianity itself did not escape from the play of these deteriorating forces. They began to act early, and they told with terrible effect. Even in the earlier centuries, to which some who ought to have a firmer grasp of the principles of freedom are so fond of appealing, as though the fathers must have authority, there were already corrup-

tions and superstitions, the traces of which are sufficiently conspicuous in the writings even of the men to whom we are invited to defer, as though they were the true interpreters of the mind of Christ. There is only one thing that is more marvellous than the degradation of the gospel into the system of childish fancies and vain conceits, of metaphysical subtleties and theological enigmas, of superstitions and old wives' fables, of sacramental magic and formalism, which is found in the writings of the early Fathers to whom even Protestants are accustomed to pay deference, and that is the recovery of the eternal truth long concealed beneath these human expositions. Had the religion not been Divine it must have been extinguished by the follies of its professed teachers. It was easier to survive the persecutions of the emperors than the metaphysics of Alexandrine fathers or the superstitions by which an ever-encroaching priesthood corrupted the simplicity that is in Christ. The all too rapid descent of the Church from the apostolic model reveals the play of those human infirmities and passions that enter into every institution which man has to work. The recovery from the evil is an irresistible evidence of the divinity of the truth which was able thus to reassert its supremacy.

Methodism has been exposed to the same perils as early Christianity, except that it has not yet been, and it is to be hoped never will be, subjected to the most insidious and devastating and degrading influence of all, the patronage of the State. It has had also to prosecute its work under the constant watch of fellow Christians, who may be described as friendly critics, but in whom it has too often been easier to discover the keenness of the critic than the kindly consideration of the friend. The

relations between different sects have their painful side, and yet they are not wholly without advantage. Were it possible to get rid of the envy, malice, and uncharitableness which enter into sectarian judgments, it is certain that all our Churches would be benefited by the play of the public opinion of the Christian world upon their procedure. Even as it is, it may be a restraining and correcting force not without good. Methodists have doubtless profited by it as well as others. But whatever help they may have received from the criticisms of contemporaries as well as from the experiences of predecessors, they have had to contend against all the influences which, in a world like ours, are ever tending to impair the force of the most aggressive Christianity. The surprise is that these adverse powers have told for so little in the way of arresting its progress. At the death of the founder it had attained a power which to all observers seemed nothing short of a marvel. With his rod and his staff, like Jacob of old, John Wesley had crossed over Jordan, and the Lord had made of him many bands. Not less than 134,004 members, scattered over different parts of the world, already belonged to the society of which he was not only the founder, but, up to the time of his death, the supreme and absolute chief.

V.

Such a result of a single life was itself wonderful, but, looking at the conditions, the subsequent progress has not been less astonishing. For the extent to which the movement had taken so distinctly personal a character constituted one of the gravest difficulties in the way of its extension, when the leader was no longer present to

answer perplexing questions, settle angry dissensions, adapt the organization to new difficulties that were sure to present themselves, and to infuse his own spirit into his fellow-workers. They were not a body of ardent men who, chafing under some real or supposed wrongs, had organized a resistance to the power by which they were oppressed, nor were they passionate enthusiasts intent on the vindication of some grand principles, who had banded themselves together for purposes of propagandism, and who, finding in Wesley the ablest exponent of their cause, had honoured him accordingly. In either of these cases the death of the chief would only have been the loss of an eminent leader. The teacher might pass away, but the truth remained immortal, and the inspiration by which it moved men's souls unquenched. However necessary a man may seem to be to any cause, the life cannot be crushed out of a great principle by the death of an individual. It is with truth as with freedom,

> "Its battle once begun,
> Passes on from bleeding sire to son,
> Though baffled oft is ever won."

But it was precisely this element of vitality which to a superficial observer might have seemed to be wanting to Methodism at the death of Wesley. It was not the society which had made Wesley, but Wesley who had made the society. Methodism was his creation, and a creation of a remarkable and somewhat anomalous character. It did not bear any sign of being a new ecclesiastical system, based upon some great ruling principle. It did not pretend to be a Church at all, but simply a confederation of good men who loved the gospel, and whose one desire was that it should be preached to all the world. Wesley had no idea of

founding either a priesthood or a hierarchy. In the inception of his work, he appears rather as the most eminent and successful leader of free lances, and though as time advanced, and the influence of the society extended, it necessarily partook more of the nature of a regular organization, it still preserved many traces of the informal character which it originally possessed. The discussions which are so common to-day, as to the exact relation Wesley meant his followers to sustain to the Established Church, are the result partly of his own hesitation, and still more of the gradual development of the society. Wesley did not forecast its character in his own mind, and then set himself to translate his own ideas into practice. The form it was to take was as unexpected to him as to any outsider. Circumstances taught him, and though he was found an extremely apt and clever pupil, and sometimes was able even to mould his teacher to his own will, the lesson of his life would be to a large extent lost if this important point was forgotten. The Divine necessity which was laid upon him sent him forth as a minister of the gospel. As the work grew, and he met with resistance, and even persecution, where he ought to have found sympathizers and allies, he was gradually forced into practical separation from the National Church, and into the organization of a body of assistants who might carry on a service the responsibility of which he could not escape. He never meant to be a schismatic or heresiarch, or anything else, but a diligent preacher of Christ's gospel. But the passion for saving souls by which he was possessed forced him into something more, made him, with or without his own ready acquiescence, the head of a society which had 240 circuits, that is, 240 centres of influence and work, 541 itinerant preachers, a

little army of non-commissioned officers in the shape of lay preachers, and a host of not less than 134,000 adherents.

But when he died the question necessarily arose, What was to become of all these people with their organization? Were they to be scattered as sheep having no shepherd? If not, how and for what were they to be kept together? Granted that it was possible to preserve the unity of the society, wherefore should it exist? Apparently there was not any principle for which to contend. The theology of Wesley was doubtless in direct opposition to Calvinism, even as set forth in the Articles, but there is no reason to suppose that his followers would have found any difficulty in preaching his doctrine in the pulpits of the Established Church, had they been willing to occupy them. There was no intention of taking up a hostile attitude to the Established Church, or of strengthening any existing form of Dissent in its protest on any question of polity. The organization, therefore, appeared to lack that basis of distinctive principle which alone could give it vitality, and there seemed no reason why it should not dissolve into its original atoms. It was meant to be a testimony for the gospel, but others were sharing that testimony to an extent which had no parallel in the days of Wesley himself. If a prophet of evil, therefore, had prophesied its dissolution, he would not have been without some ground for such a prediction. The event, however, has signally falsified calculations which might at the time have commended themselves to worldly wisdom. The society survived the death of its founder; it has survived many a difficulty since, and grows notwithstanding them all. The Evangelical party within the Establishment, starting with all outward advan-

tages in its favour, might have been expected to absorb the Wesleyans into itself. But the decay which has made such progress in the school which has inherited the traditions of Newton, Venn, and Simeon, has not touched the great body outside the Establishment, holding the same theological principles, and engaged in the same Evangelical mission.

VI.

Eighty years after Wesley's death it was calculated that twelve millions of people were receiving Methodist instruction, and that three millions were actually members of Methodist societies. A more extraordinary religious phenomenon it would not be easy to point out. While that eighteenth century was running its varied and troubled course, one man, doubtless of considerable power and even genius, but in these points having numbers who were his equals or even superiors, was quietly doing a work of which here is the outward and visible result. During the period of his active life, England won one empire and lost another. The nation was rent asunder by civil war, and hindered in its internal progress by the petty intrigues of rival statesmen and the narrow policy of sovereigns, who did not understand the temper of the people, and did not love the liberty of the constitution. But in the midst of all the struggles and changes of party, the rise and fall of successive ministries, the internal difficulties and the external conflicts of an era in which there is little on which an Englishman can look back with any pride or even satisfaction, the great Christian worker who could truly say, "One thing I do," steadily held on his course. His power was felt, but even those who could not deny its reality, all judged it as Festus judged the ministry of

the apostle of the Gentiles. Fashion sometimes sneered, now and then condescended to look at this strange eccentricity which was affecting such numbers, always at heart despised and hated the work and the worker. Philosophy scoffed; authority stretched out its hand to check a movement so revolutionary; a formal religion, jealous of proceedings so contrary to established ideas, sometimes stood aloof, while at others it did not scruple at active opposition; but none of these things moved the heart of a man who felt himself set for the extension of the gospel. And of all the great men of the century there is not one who left on it a deeper impression, or did in it a more abiding work than the self-denying and untiring worker, in labours abundant, as in spirit he was pure and unselfish, who laid the foundations of Wesleyan Methodism.

The century could boast of great statesmen, like Fox and the two Pitts, who in different ways gave abundant proof of ardent patriotism and high political ability. It had distinguished generals, two of whom, Wolfe and Clive, won not only laurels for themselves, but wide provinces for their country. If it was not a period of great intellectual activity, it had philosophers and poets, some of whom had high repute in their own time, and are not forgotten now. To all these John Wesley must have appeared a man of very secondary calibre, if indeed they remembered him at all. But which of them all has left a monument so enduring, or which of them is there the subtraction of whose teaching and influence would have been so real a calamity as the loss of the power wielded by Wesley?

His influence was not solely or even chiefly the fruit of brilliant gifts of mind. John Wesley was, indeed, a

man of great intellectual force, as well as of extraordinary powers of physical endurance. The *mens sana in corpore sano* was found in him in a high degree. He was careful to observe the laws of health, and his intellectual vigour was associated with a robustness of body which enabled him to go through an amount of toil which would have been impossible to an ordinary man. Incessant activity helped to free his mind from morbid fancies that might otherwise have preyed upon it, and to keep that healthful balance of judgment which was so important an element in an ecclesiastical leader. In intellectual force he towered above all his Evangelical associates. Whitefield had far more of the electric power of oratory which carries away great multitudes by the storm and tempest of its own passion. His brother Charles had a loftier, more penetrating, more philosophic mind, but in power John was above him. The union of the two brothers in the common work helped on its success; but if Charles furnished more of the spiritual and contemplative element, the master-mind that called the society into being and gave it character and constitution was that of John. It is easy, in reading the writings of John Wesley, to single out much that was grotesque and ludicrous, traces of weakness, utterances marked by narrowness and bigotry; but he must be blindly prejudiced who takes these as the characteristic features of the books, and is unable to appreciate the keen insight, the logical acumen, and the sagacious common-sense of the writer. Wesley was no unlearned pretender who, because he succeeded in attracting crowds of hearers, supposed himself entitled to sneer at a learning he did not possess, and to treat his own shrewd observation as enabling him to dispense with all

such help, and yet to pronounce on the most doubtful and delicate problems with a dogmatism from which men of large scholarship would shrink. Wesley had far too much culture and native strength of mind to play a part like this. No man attains to such power as his, much less is able to exercise it so long, without massiveness of intellect, as well as high moral and spiritual qualities.

That Wesley had constructive, administrative, diplomatic, and legislative genius is not to be questioned. But genius was not the real source of his success. His success could not have taken the form, possibly could not have attained the extent it did, without genius; but genius certainly would not have sufficed without consecration. There were some elements in Wesley's character which must have seriously militated against his influence and neutralized the effect which genius alone would have produced. He was singularly guileless and foolishly trustful, and, as a natural consequence, he was frequently involved in embarrassing situations. He was very unwilling to brook contradiction, and, in the natural course of things, this spirit grew as he became more powerful. Had there been nothing to sustain him amid the opposition and criticism to which he often exposed himself by these very defects, his influence would speedily have been lost. But behind intellect was character, and the primary element in that character was a complete absorption in his work which made his life one manfestation of sublime self-sacrifice. It is true that he built up an enormous power for himself; a power whose roots went deeper, and whose dominion was more widespread, than that of the proudest monarch of the times. But the more closely

the story of his life is examined and his self-revelations scrutinized, the clearer does it become that no dreams of human ambition fired his soul, that the power came to him unsought, as the natural fruit of the distinguished service he was doing, and that the grand aim of his life was not to erect a throne for himself, but to establish the rule of Christ in poor sinning souls.

Here is the chief point of interest and instruction in the life not only of Wesley but of Methodism itself. A passion for saving souls possessed the man and gave him exceptional force. If he undertook to deal with ecclesiastical questions at all, it was only because they crossed him in the work to which brains and heart and life were all consecrated. He was a true and loyal son of the Anglican Church, and had he been allowed to continue his labours undisturbed, would never have been anything else. It has been said very truly that he would never have made a good parish priest, and that the parochial system of the Church of England, in which some of its sons are so fond of making their boast, was never greatly valued by him. He had a soul that was above a parish or a congregation; a soul that would not allow its sphere of labour for Christ to be curtailed and limited by any arbitrary lines. He would have been just as unfitted to conform to the narrow and selfish ideas of those members of Dissenting congregations who fancy that their minister belongs to them, not to Christ, and who regard every service done for the glory of God in the outside world as some infraction of their right to his entire and undivided energy. Wesley could never have been confined to parish or to diocese, but he was a devoted son of the Church till its authorities drove him into exile. It was persecution which forced him into

independence and so chased him into fame. But throughout life his one care was about the work that lay close to his heart. He claimed liberty to preach, and would not allow that liberty to be called in question of any man. He summoned assistants that they might be employed in this one holy work, the zeal for which was the master-passion of his life. To tell what he did under the inspiration of this passion is simply to write the full story of his life. He traversed continents and oceans, he preached sermons, wrote books, founded great institutions—with a view to the success of his great spiritual work. The intensity of his feeling multiplied all his resources. It could not be otherwise. The mind, freed from the distraction and irritation of conflicting motives, must gain an accession of strength from its concentration on any one point. Singleness of eye gives clearness and breadth of vision, and the will gathers strength from the elevation of the soul above selfish motives that debase its aims and enfeeble its purpose. A penetrating insight, little, if at all, short of intuition, is one of the fruits of this unselfishness of soul. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

It needs no theory of a special interposition of Providence to induce the belief that in a consecration to the work of God so complete as was seen in John Wesley, there was a quickening of intellect. The whole man became grander, because of the ruling passion in the soul. That God gave liberally of the heavenly wisdom to one by whom it was so earnestly sought, and sought not for his own aggrandizement, but for the fulfilment of that work on which had been expended the groans, the tears, the agony, the blood of the Son of God, will be doubted only by such as deny the efficacy of prayer.

But apart even from such direct communications, there was light and life in the fervour which so many despised as fanaticism. Fanatics have more than once proved themselves to be of the wisest as well as the noblest of men—the world's teachers, as well as the world's heroes and martyrs. The grand passion, which their own generation cannot understand, itself gives them a higher wisdom by which all generations are to profit. It is so with patriotism which has inspired and ennobled men who else would have been commonplace. Must it not be even more so with the mightiest passion of all, that which filled the heart of Wesley and Whitefield, as before it had possessed Paul and John, and which all had caught from Him whose name will yet be exalted above every name, because under the all-absorbing influence of that passion for saving souls, too coldly described when it is called an "enthusiasm for humanity," He condescended to death, even the death of the cross.

Under its power John Wesley not only developed all the strength of no common intellect, but performed an amount of work which even to us in these busy days appears almost incredible. A comparison between the toil of that time and that of the present is not easy. Travelling was slower and more difficult; but on that very account the work of a preacher who was perpetually travelling might possibly be less exhausting. The air and exercise would at all events afford a refreshment to the wearied brain which is not found to-day, as we are whirled along hundreds of miles in a day, endeavouring as we journey to turn the railway carriage into a study, and so to secure that time for reading which, alas, we are often unable to find in our own homes. But it is superfluous to enter into such calculations when looking at the

work of a man who must have passed a great part of his active life either in the saddle or in the pulpit. We have elaborate statistics of the number of miles he travelled, of the sermons he preached, of the people he addressed, and they are surprising enough. But it is the broad view of a life which was spent with one end in view that is so impressive. Wesley seems to have attained the secret of uniting a maximum of work with a minimum of rest. How far the force of his indomitable will and the sustaining strength of his holy zeal enabled him to contend against the necessary exhaustion of nature, and how much was due to his wonderful constitution, it is neither possible nor necessary to decide. It would have been impossible for one who was not naturally robust to carry on such labours; and yet he may have owed something of his remarkable powers of endurance to a strength of will, itself due to the impelling force of holy motive behind it, that refused to yield to the ordinary conditions of exhaustion.

VII.

The method of his work was hardly less remarkable than its extent. To us there is nothing strange or unusual in field preaching; but when Wesley and Whitefield began their work, it was a novelty and, in the eyes of those refined people, who then as now assumed the right of laying down the laws of taste for the Church and the world, an abomination. Wesley himself was at first disinclined to a procedure so unconventional, but was won over to it by Whitefield. This great evangelist had already been for some time carrying on his work at Bristol before Wesley joined him. This irregular

procedure was forced upon them both by the action of "priests and parasites," as the Methodist biographer of Wesley calls them. Whitefield, as the more impulsive, the more indifferent to mere ecclesiastical form, the more daring of the two, was the first to commence this new work by preaching to the Kingswood colliers; and when he was called to the same service in London, he was relieved from all anxiety as to the continuance of his earlier mission by enlisting the co-operation of Wesley. Moorfields, Kennington Common, Blackheath, and other open spaces in the neighbourhood of London, next became the scenes of Whitefield's devoted labours; and here again, after a short interval, Wesley joined him. Whitefield's preaching in the metropolis had produced one of those extraordinary impressions which send a thrill through an entire community. Southey, who was certainly not prejudiced in favour of him or his work, says: "His favourite ground upon week-days was Kennington Common, and there prodigious multitudes gathered together to hear him; he had sometimes four-score carriages (in those days no inconsiderable number for London to send forth on such an occasion), very many horsemen, and from 30,000 to 40,000 on foot." Had selfishness alloyed the purity of Whitefield's motives, he might have hesitated before asking another to come and share the success which he was then reaping. But neither he nor Wesley could have done the work they accomplished, had their zeal been debased by such alloy as this. They did not use their preaching as a pedestal on which to exalt themselves, but were absolutely the servants of their Lord, living only to toil for Him. It is not suggested that they were exempt from the common weaknesses of humanity, but only that all

are forgotten in view of their self-sacrificing devotion to their work. Their work dominated them, and yet they derived a singular grandeur from their dedication to it. Thus Whitefield, instead of harbouring any unworthy jealousy, is eager only to have Wesley's co-operation. "While he was engaged in this triumphant career, Wesley arrived, and on the day after his arrival accompanied him to Blackheath, expecting to hear him preach; but when they were upon the ground, where about 12,000 or 14,000 were assembled, Whitefield desired him to preach in his stead. Wesley was a little surprised at this, and somewhat reluctant, for, he says, nature recoiled. He did not, however, refuse; and being greatly moved with compassion for the rich that were present, he addressed his discourse particularly to them. Some of them seemed to attend, while others drove away in their coaches from so uncouth a preacher. Whitefield notices this circumstance in his journal with great satisfaction: 'I had the pleasure,' he says, 'of introducing my honoured and revered friend, Mr. John Wesley, to preach at Blackheath. The Lord give him ten thousand times more success than He has given me! I went to bed rejoicing that another fresh inroad was made upon Satan's territories by Mr. Wesley's following me in field preaching in London as well as in Bristol.'"[1]

Whitefield was perfectly right in his estimate of the significance of the step which Wesley had taken. It is not too much to say that, apart from open-air preaching, Methodism would never have had an existence. A spirit so weak as to shrink from this unpopular mode of action would have been unequal to the great task of founding such a system; but even had the spirit been

[1] Southey's *Life of Wesley*, p. 164.

willing and courageous, it is hard to see by what other methods the work could have been carried on. Open-air preaching is not, as some would seem to suppose, an essential feature in a great revival. On the contrary, it can hardly be denied that it has its own distinct disadvantages. There is an impressiveness in the gathering of immense multitudes who could not be collected in any single building; and in some parts of the country, especially in Wales, there are sacred associations connected with these field-preachings which give them a wonderful power over the imaginations and the hearts of the people. But the speaker who desires to produce a permanent impression upon his hearers, and who is as desirous to instruct the mind as to move the feelings, would generally prefer an audience gathered in a building and brought within easier reach of his voice. With us, however, the matter is discussed on grounds of pure expediency, except where sentiment inclines a certain class to prefer open-air services without regard to questions of comparative utility. It was different in Wesley's time. That was a day when the Establishment was, as Sydney Smith, who did so little to correct the evil, truly said, "dying of dignity," and dignity was certainly outraged by these young clergymen going out into the highways and hedges in order to compel men to come in. It is true that at first they used to appear in full canonicals, and the clergyman arrayed in gown and bands, addressing the motley crowds who were gathered, some scoffing, some pouring forth their ribald jests, some carrying on their trades, and some waiting for opportunity to attack the preacher, must have been rather an extraordinary spectacle. But the clerical costume was a concession made to decorum, to conservative prejudice,

to their own Churchmanship. It did nothing, however, to conciliate the opponents who forced them into these erratic ways, and then complained of them for walking in them.

The fact is the field-preaching was a necessity, just as the lay-preaching became a necessity afterwards. John Wesley was even more reluctant to adopt the latter than the former, and indeed did not yield until his venerable mother, in relation to whom Miss Julia Wedgwood says with considerable truth, "the mother of the Wesleys was Wesleyanism," employed her influence to persuade him to obey the guidance of Providence as well as the teachings of common-sense. In both cases Wesley was under a constraint which he could not escape, and the result has been the foundation of his great community. The churches were closed against him, therefore by degrees he was led to preach on the hill-side, on the wild heath, by the shores of the sea, in the market-place, wherever the crowds who were eager to hear him could be collected. A great and effectual door was open, and he felt he must enter in. To a man of his mental habits and early associations the necessity was an extremely painful one, and must have required a struggle which it is very hard for us to understand. Nothing could have enabled him to overcome it except the ineffaceable conviction, which every year made stronger, that God had called him to preach the gospel of His Son, and that in doing that he must take no counsel with flesh and blood. What would have been the consequence had the bishops pursued the course towards him which Lord Macaulay contends the authorities of the Romish Church would have adopted in relation to a man of similar spirit in their community, it would be bootless to inquire. The fact is the bishops

took an attitude of resistance in which they were sustained by the great majority of their clergy, and Wesley was forced to find other places than the churches wherein to preach, and other helpers beside ordained clergymen wherewith to war. The things which seemed to be most adverse in this, as in a thousand examples, have turned rather to the furtherance of the gospel. Persecution and hindrance were just what Wesley needed most for the perfecting of his own character, and the new methods on which he was forced were just what the extending dimensions and growing freedom of his work imperatively required. He ceased to be a priest of the Church as by law established, he became the apostle of the eighteenth century. His society, emancipated from the trammels which Church law and habit must have imposed upon it, displayed a catholic temper and a capacity for world-wide extension. What might have become a mere party or "school of thought" in the Anglican Church, with a spirit as hesitating and cautious, a fear of worldly consequences as chilling and paralyzing in its effects, a nervous anxiety as to the full application of its own principles, and a humble desire to secure the favour of sacerdotalists, as marked as that which we deplore in the Evangelicals, has become a great independent community to which even High Church bishops hold out the olive branch. It is not Methodism alone, but the nation, the world, the sacred cause of Christianity, that has gained by the harsh usage which, in driving John Wesley out of the pale of Church life, snapped the fetters which else might have bound him, and sent him forth disinherited and disowned, but independent and free.

VIII.

It was his work which gave greatness to Wesley. It is not easy to believe that he could under any conditions have remained an obscure man, unless indeed he had been cabined and confined within the narrow limits of a country parish. A man of whom Lord Macaulay could say that "his eloquence and logical acuteness would have made him eminent in literature," that his "genius for government was not inferior to that of Richelieu;" whom one so entirely out of sympathy with the spirit of his teaching as this great historian describes as "the first of theological statesmen," and bracketing him with Whitefield as "the first of theological orators," pronounces them "two of the most remarkable men of the eighteenth century;" and whom Mr. Lecky characterizes as "one of the most powerful and acute intellects in England"—must, under any but the most unpropitious circumstances, have achieved distinction in whatever sphere he filled. But the man is so completely overshadowed by his work, and the results of that work have been so extraordinary, that it is easy to lose sight of his individual qualities, and to regard him as one lifted up by the marvels of his success to an eminence which otherwise he could never have reached. John Wesley was born to be a leader of men, and he is all the greater because, turning aside from the paths of ambition, "he devoted all his powers," to quote Lord Macaulay's words, "in defiance of obloquy and derision, to what he sincerely considered the highest good of his species."

There were, however, elements in the character of the man which betrayed him into foibles and follies, over which his enemies have not failed to make sport. They

have never been able to establish a charge against the simplicity of his spirit or the purity of his life. But he very early attained to that absolute faith in himself which is an essential quality in one who has to command, but some of whose developments are anything but lovely. That he was dogmatic, dictatorial, arrogant, is conceded by his admirers; but they may urge that even these faults were the result not of a haughty and overbearing temper, but of a profound conviction of duty. Thus he provoked angry opposition, and created unfortunate scandal in Georgia by his high-handed attempt to excommunicate the young lady who had rejected his proposals and preferred those of another suitor; but however he may have allowed his judgment, usually sound enough, to be warped by personal mortification, the worst that is to be said of him is what Mr. Tyerman admits, that "his conduct as a priest of the Church of England might be, as it doubtless was, arrogant, foolish, offensive, intolerant." So in his separation from the mystic and Nonjuror, William Law, to whom, in utter forgetfulness of the pleasure and profit of their earlier intercourse, by which he had so largely benefited, he wrote, only ten days before his conversion, a long, petulant, dictatorial letter, reproaching him with having kept back from him the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, and intimating in strong and discourteous language his own conviction and that of Bohler, that the spiritual condition of Law was a very dangerous one."[1] In the same category are to be classed the controversial faults which led Toplady to call him the "pope," and the saintly Hervey to say, "he is so unfair in his quotations, and so *magisterial* in his manner, that I find no small difficulty

[1] Lecky's *Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii. p. 558.

to preserve the decency of the gentleman and the meekness of the Christian in my intended answer." Here, however, it is fair to say that violence in controversy was not found on one side only, and if the special fault of Wesley was that air and tone of infallibility, which is extremely provocative to an adversary, some of his opponents repaid him in full measure by the trenchant severity and truculence of their criticisms.

His dealings with his preachers supply even more numerous illustrations of this spirit. With them he was the autocrat, and from his decrees there was to be no appeal. He set up and he cast down ; he decided when and where clerical functions might be lawfully exercised, and where the assumption of them became an unwarrantable intrusion into the sacred office ; he allowed them to use the title of "Reverend" and wear the gown and bands in Scotland, and insisted on their laying both aside when they returned to England. The head of a monastic order could not have been more exacting in his demands, more arbitrary in his temper, more minute in his regulations. But it is always to be remembered that before he assumed this authority he had been raised to an abnormal elevation by a long career of unprecedented success. The humble clergyman had become a mighty power in the Church and the country. He was the head of a sect already numerous and continually growing, and which owed its existence to his heart-stirring eloquence and indefatigable labours. He must have been more than human if all this had not told upon him. What redeems his character from the reproach which might otherwise have come upon it, and what, in truth, helped to extend and perpetuate the influence which he actually enjoyed, was that, even in the exercise

of this supremacy, there was no sign of self-seeking. What he did was evidently done in the interests of the society, not for the promotion of any personal objects. He spoke with decision because he believed himself to be right. His most devoted followers had not a more unwavering faith in his oracular wisdom than he had himself, and consequently he was able to speak with authority.

Still these weaknesses are, as might be expected, eagerly seized by those who regard the Evangelical movement in general, and Methodism in particular, as nothing better than an epidemic of religious hysteria, and who are especially anxious to lower the moral status of Wesley himself. Happily the number of such critics is but small, and they consist almost entirely of those whose ecclesiastical prejudices will not suffer them to forget that Wesley headed a secession of which Buckle, who writes with that impartiality to be expected from one who was outside both parties, and had little sympathy with either, says, "The injury it inflicted upon the English Church is far greater than is generally supposed, and I am inclined to think is hardly inferior to that which, in the sixteenth century, Protestantism inflicted upon Popery."[1] Philosophic historians recognize, as all honest observers must recognize, the immense gain to the nation from the ministry of Wesley and Whitefield, and those who followed in their train. They breathed a new spirit into all the Churches; they wrought a great moral transformation in large classes of the people; they produced a perceptible change even on the society which branded them as wild fanatics. The districts in which they principally laboured, and where some of their

[1] Buckle's *Civilisation*, vol. i. p. 385.

most signal victories were won, had been wastes of paganism and sin. There were Churches and clergymen, but the people were steeped in ignorance, brutality, and vice. Cornwall at the time needed the sympathy of Christian hearts and the teaching of Christian lips as much as those distant regions of heathendom which just then were beginning to engage the attention and employ the efforts of the Church. There was a province of a Christian country where Christianity was almost unknown. It did not stand alone, for there were other districts in which the darkness was not less gross, and the sin as open and unblushing. But, lying at the extreme corner of the island, Cornwall presented the most impressive example of that gradual lapse into paganism which, alas, was overtaking the whole country. To it the Wesleys went with their impassioned zeal, their vivid proclamations of the gospel, their solemn call to sinners to flee from the wrath to come. The change they produced remains to this day. As with the miners of Northumberland, the roughs of Moorfields, the colliers of Kingswood, so among these neglected fishermen and peasants of Cornwall the word was with power. The aspect of the country and the character of the people are the best testimony to the effects of Wesley's mission. A county was reclaimed to Christianity by the preaching and labours of the new apostle. In every little village may be seen the Methodist chapel, plain and unpretending perhaps, but yet a real sign of the faith and self-devotion of the people, by whose free gifts it has been reared. Wherever the larger populations are gathered, there are the more spacious and imposing sanctuaries of the body, and in them are collected vast congregations whose life and fervour

evidence that their religion is not a mere product of habit or form. Go into the cottage and you will find the Bible and Wesley's hymns everywhere, and ever and anon will come floating on the quiet evening air the strains of some favourite hymn, sung with an emotion that would abundantly compensate for the lack of musical art. The man who cannot thank God for such a work and feel that the nation owes a debt of gratitude to the man who inaugurated it, or who prefers to substitute a caricature for the true portrait, by dwelling only on his eccentricities and weaknesses, because forsooth he belonged to another section of the Church, must be a narrow bigot. Are they to be more admired and commended who think it necessary to organize a mission to these earnest but, as Anglicans regard them, imperfect Christians. The Church which neglected them when they were pagans is intent on winning them into its fold now that they are Christians. True they have learned the preciousness of Christ, but they are ignorant of the glory of the Church, and have not tasted of the grace of its sacraments. So the trumpet has been blown, and the standard unfurled, and gallant young men from the universities have been summoned to show their chivalry by throwing themselves into the noble work of turning Christians into Churchmen. A more miserable exhibition of sacerdotal pretension and exclusiveness this century has not witnessed.

IX.

It is by such acts as these, rather than by the friendly overtures which Church defenders are accustomed from time to time to address to them, that Wesleyan

Methodists will judge of the spirit of the Establishment towards them. The talk which has been expended on this point might, for all practical purposes, as well never have been spoken. It is true that there have always been some among the Methodist leaders who have followed their founder in his Toryism, have sympathized with the Establishment in its struggles for the maintenance of its ascendancy, and have been extremely anxious to clear themselves from all suspicion of complicity with Dissent, and, on the other side, there are bishops and others who would be extremely delighted to welcome the return of the Methodists to the fold. But despite these friendly dispositions on both sides, Methodism has, through the whole course of its history, exhibited a constant drift towards Dissent, and what is not very wonderful, considering the actual relations of the two parties, every proposal of reconciliation on the side of the Establishment has only confirmed and increased the tendency towards a more decided Nonconformity. The Bishop of Lincoln has done more towards forcing Methodists into sympathy with the aims of the Liberation Society than all the persuasions of its own advocates have been able to accomplish. The bishop is not to be blamed, for he did nothing more than carry out the spirit of a system which, if true to itself, may accept an unconditional surrender as from penitent rebels, but will certainly not treat with any body of Dissenters on equal terms. The case is well put by Dr. Rigg, who is the last to be accused of Radicalism, when he says, "It would be impossible for the Church of England to admit all Methodist ministers, merely as such, to take full rank and authority in the administration of the sacraments. To do so would be to renounce the dogma

of sacerdotal succession, and to admit that the validity of orders has no relation to episcopal authority. And, on the other hand, it is certain that neither the Methodist people nor their ministers would endure a word of re-ordination, or consent to the relinquishment of the right of sacramental administration. Besides, it is just as likely that Methodism should absorb Anglican Episcopacy as that Anglican Episcopacy should absorb Methodism."[1] There is a ring of manly independence and unbending resolve about this which gives little promise of the absorption of which many Anglicans dream. Even if there were a disposition towards it on the part of Methodists, it must be effectually checked by such action as the establishment of the bishopric of Truro. Methodists are not likely to regard with favour a Church which sends forth a mission for the avowed purpose of converting them to a more apostolic faith, which treats a county that they had evangelized as though it were an outlying spiritual waste, and which addresses itself to the people whom they have gathered to Christ as though they were alike without Church, without ministers, and without ordinances.

Judged from their own standpoint, the bishop and his missionaries are right. The two systems are in irreconcileable antagonism, and have been so from the time when John Wesley took the decisive step by which he passed from the work of a parish priest to that of a great revivalist, whose field was the world, and whose mission was not to superintend parochial affairs or even to administer the ordinances to the villagers committed to his care, but to preach the gospel to every creature. There is a well-known passage of Lord Macaulay's, in

[1] *Churchmanship of John Wesley*, p. 111.

which he compares the treatment of enthusiasts by the Churches of England and Rome respectively, greatly to the disadvantage of the former. But his presentation of the contrast, or, at all events, the inference he draws from it, is open to question. "The Catholic Church," he says, "neither submits to enthusiasm nor proscribes it, but uses it." But is it fair to compare a Church ruled by an all-powerful hierarchy, who have to consult only their own feelings, and who work entirely for spiritual or ecclesiastical ends, with an Erastian institution, in which the will of the State is supreme, and the views of whose rulers must, to a considerable extent, be affected by politicians with whom they are in constant association, and who regard even the National Church itself as one of the instruments of secular policy? What a Church may do with enthusiasts is one thing, what a State establishment can undertake with safety and wisdom is a very different one. It may be perfectly true that "the ignorant enthusiast whom the Anglican Church makes an enemy, and, whatever the polite and learned may think, a most dangerous enemy, the Catholic Church makes a champion," and yet there may be no reason for imputing any blame to the former because of this difference. It arises out of the very nature of things. It would not be easy to find two more incompatible elements than Erastianism and spiritual enthusiasm.

Speaking of the constituents of the Anglican Church, Mr. Brewer says: "Their employments were not amidst the horrors and destructions of war, they were not absorbed in the search for a Holy Grail, or spiritual idealism of any kind. The pursuits of commerce are attended by no bitter remorse, no tears of blood, no spiritual wrestlings of wasted frames and bended knees, no knight-

errantry for heaven."[1] The touch of satire here is eminently characteristic and true. The sneer may have been aimed at the "knight-errantry for heaven," but it lights rather on the institution which is called a Church and yet has no place for spiritual idealism in it. It is unjust to blame the bishops for repressing John Wesley. They acted as bishops would have acted at any period in the history of the Establishment. If it be contended that the prelates would not to-day follow the example of their predecessors were another Wesley to arise, the answer is that the difference is in the *Zeitgeist*, not in the spirit of Erastianism, and if a spiritual idealist were tolerated it would only be because, with the prevalent tendency of public opinion, it would be safer for the Establishment to tolerate than suppress.

"Place Ignatius Loyola at Oxford. He is certain to become the head of a formidable secession. Place John Wesley at Rome. He is certain to be the first General of a new society devoted to the interests and honour of the Church."[2] So says Lord Macaulay, judging the whole subject, however, in the spirit of one who has never fully measured the strength of spiritual forces. Since his time the Anglican Church has learned what, on his showing, must be more wisdom. Enthusiasm has been tolerated at Oxford, and the result is that the Establishment is shaken to its very foundation, and bishops, unable to manage their recusant clergy, go whining to Parliament, first for a Public Worship Regulation Act, and then for a Royal Commission, in the hope that it may deliver them from the difficulty created by their own failure to rule. As to John Wesley, it is, to say the least,

[1] *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, vol. iv. p. 658.
[2] *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 241.

extremely doubtful whether he could ever have been made a good General of a religious order within the Establishment, and it is certain that, if he had subsided into such a position, the great work he did for England and the world would never have been accomplished. Even if it be a defect in the organization and tactics of the Anglican Church, it is a happy accident both for freedom and religion. A Church which had the art of suppressing individual thought and action would be a curse to the nation in all the highest elements of its life. No doubt the policy has been the best for Rome, but we have reason for profound gratitude that it has not been found possible at Lambeth. As the General of a Protestant order, Wesley would have carried on a long and successful course of preaching, and have founded a body corresponding to the preaching friars of the Romish Church, who, so long as they retained their pristine zeal and force, might have wrought great good in the nation. But they would have been out of harmony with the spirit and system of the Church itself, and certainly would have been a poor substitute for that marvellous economy of spiritual force, as developed in class meetings, band meetings, leaders' meetings, and the various gatherings of the society for mutual edification, which has made Methodism a blessing alike to the Church and the world. The General of an order would have played a poor part indeed compared with that which has fallen to the founder of a society whose "line has gone through all the earth, and its words to the end of the world." Whatever the cause, we may well thank God for the effect.

But in truth it was only in the earlier period of his career that such treatment as Lord Macaulay would have had the bishops accord to Wesley was possible.

We have High Churchmen of to-day very eager to claim the great Methodist leader as their own, and it is certain that there was a High Church period in his experience. If the bishops could have attached him to the Church at that time he might have become the head of a sacerdotal company. But that was before he was possessed with that Divine passion which made him the mighty preacher he was. From the day that he yielded up his soul to this holy inspiration, he was, though he long failed to perceive it himself, hopelessly alienated from the Established Church.

Canon Curteis, in his Bampton Lecture on Dissent, briefly describes Methodism thus: "Leading idea—revival of religion by an appeal to the 'feelings.' Method adopted —an elaborate system of 'societies,' preaching the doctrine of 'sensible conversion.'" The definition may be fairly challenged as inadequate, as lacking in scientific precision, as calculated to create prejudice by some of its terms. The Canon, however, marks out the difference between the two systems much more distinctly, and shows when the divergence of Wesley from the Church actually began:—"On Wednesday, May 24, 1738, about nine o'clock in the evening, at a 'Society's' meeting in Aldersgate Street, Wesley persuaded himself that he too had felt the desired transition, and had passed—*from what, to what?* In the answer to that question lies the whole doctrinal difference between modern Wesleyanism and the Church of England. I am not aware of any other cause of severance. But yet (so delicate a thing is theology!) in this one little point lies the germ of that miserable estrangement which we all deplore, and which is parting asunder every day more widely hundreds and hundreds of Christian brothers in speech, sons of the same vener-

able mother Church, meaning almost (if not quite) the same thing, and using habitually the same formularies, the same hymns, and the same Bible." [1]

Now, whatever judgment may be formed as to the exact significance of the point at issue, it is to be observed that the date which the learned Canon regards as marking the time at which Wesley began to be "disturbed with a transient fanaticism" is also that at which his marvellous power and usefulness commenced. Fanaticism or not, it was certainly not "transient." There could be no more incorrect description of the relation between Wesley and his followers than to represent modern Wesleyans as having accepted a doctrine of the new birth which the leader, though he was attracted by it for a time, afterwards renounced. To say that "the very doctrine on which his modern followers have based their separation from the Church and their alliance with Puritan Dissenters is nothing less than a transient and foreign element in their great founder's teaching," is to misread Wesley and to misunderstand the spirit of his work. That Wesley adopted the Puritan theology no one would be mad enough to assert; and if there has seemed to be a closer alliance of late between Wesleyans and Puritan Dissenters, it has been because the latter have been gradually losing their hold of the distinctive principles of Calvinism, and coming to understand that underlying all the disputes of Calvinists and Arminians is a substratum of Evangelical doctrine which is common to both.

Wesley hated Calvinism, but the Puritan theory of the new birth was the life and soul of all his teaching. There is absolutely no foundation for the assertion

[1] Curteis, *Bampton Lectures*, 1871, pp. 369-70.

that the longer he lived the more resolutely he turned away from these Puritan errors. It is certainly hard to say what may not be proved by short expressions from Wesley's writings, if detached from their context and interpreted in the light of the ideas which modern Anglicans have resolved to read into them. But they are not just to their own Church. In the eagerness of their desire to prove that John Wesley was one of themselves, Churchmen seem to forget that the stronger the case they establish the more severe the condemnation which comes back on that Church and its rulers. Here was a devout and godly man, a man of power rarely equalled, who swayed vast multitudes of men, and drew them to Christ, but led them away from the Church. How was it that the Church, instead of using such a man as one of her chief agents, placing him even on an episcopal throne, cast him out, and forced him to become the chief of a powerful secession, if after all, the most important difference in doctrine was with him only a passing "phase of opinion"? The fact is, the Church could not retain him, because that doctrinal difference was vital. To tell us that to say this is "simply to haul down the true colours of the Wesleyan revival and to surrender at discretion to Puritan dictation," is to ignore the facts. What Wesley and Whitefield did was due to their faithful warnings of the wrath to come, and their earnest pleadings with men that they would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Apart from these, their oratory would have been as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. The rough, weather-worn cheeks of sailors and miners would not have been furrowed with tears, the hard selfishness of men of the world would not have yielded even for the moment to better

impulses, the slaves of passion and vice would not have been freed from the demons which possessed them and brought to sit at the feet of Jesus in their right minds, whole communities would not have been gathered out of the power of evil, and united by bands of faith and love for works of piety and benevolence, had these preachers addressed them as English Christians who had not been faithful to their baptismal vows, and needed to be restored to their Church by some sacrament of confession and penance. It was the emphatic and spirit-stirring proclamation of Christ as the Saviour who could deliver them from the sin in which they were plunged, and the death by which they were threatened, which made Methodism; and if it should ever forget that truth and neglect that work, the day of its extinction will be nigh.

IX.

Canon Curteis puts very pointedly the real distinction between the two systems. "For this is, in one word, the question between Catholicity and Puritanism. Is the outward organized Church—with its visible mechanism, its regularly commissioned officers, its code of laws (ritual, disciplinary, and doctrinal), and its exterior means of grace—nought? or is it, on the contrary, the special organ of the Holy Ghost, the vehicle and instrument and 'sacrament' (as it were) of His inward operations, in renewing and redeeming mankind? In this question lies the whole controversy between the Church of England and 'Dissent.' And the controversy is gathered into a point on the (at first sight) irrelevant doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration."[1]

[1] Curteis, *Bampton Lectures*, 1871, p. 364.

Where the Methodists will be found in a controversy of this kind there can be no question. As regards the spiritual nature of religion and the necessity of conversion, they are, and always have been, Puritans of the Puritans. They have their independent opinions on Church polity, but in Evangelical doctrine and practice they are Puritan, and feel that in Puritanism is their strength. It is this which, even more than the difference about orders, on which some compromise or mode of adjustment might be found, which makes their reconciliation with the Anglican Church an impossibility. At every point the Catholic theory crosses their most sacred convictions. They are often charged with sectarianism, and sectarian they are, if an implicit belief in the efficiency of Methodism as the most potent instrument for the extension of the Church of Christ, and a consequent concentration of all their efforts to develope all its resources to the utmost, be sectarian. But in the evil sense of the term—that is, in the belief that they, and they alone, are the people of the Lord—Methodists have never been sectarian. Hence they recoil from a Church which would shut them out from all communion with Protestant Christendom. As Dr. Rigg puts it, "The liberty of friendship and co-operation which it now enjoys would have to be given up. From a large and wealthy place, where almost all Evangelical Churches can meet, it would have to retire into a very strait room." Methodists would feel themselves degraded not ennobled, their ecclesiastical sympathies narrowed, and that in an age when there is general expansion, and, worst of all, their plain testimony for Evangelical truth compromised, by their association with a system including a theory of apostolical succession and sacra-

mental grace, which they regard as contrary to the first principles of the gospel of Christ, by what is pleasantly called Reunion, but would really be absorption in the State Church.

The rapid advances of sacerdotalism in the State Church make all such projects increasingly hopeless, although, strange to tell, it is the sacerdotal party which is most anxious to secure this reunion, and which, in the hope of bringing it about, endeavours to persuade Wesleyans that their founder was a High Churchman with a strong tinge of Ritualism. The controversy is a very profitless one, and is to be settled mainly by reference to dates. One who did not hesitate to pronounce the apostolical succession "a fable, which no man ever did or can prove," could certainly not have been a High Churchman at the time when he thus wrote. No doubt he was a High Churchman before 1738, but, in the modern sense of the term, certainly not after 1738, for Dr. Rigg has done good service by showing that his oft-quoted expression in a letter dated 1775, "I am a High Churchman, the son of a High Churchman," has a political, not an ecclesiastical sense. As has been already pointed out in the course of these lectures, that was the ordinary use of the term at the period. The meaning of the description which occurs in a letter to a politician on a political subject is thus correctly indicated: "Wesley was never a political Low Churchman. He had no Dissenting predilections, or Puritan punctilios, or latitudinarian laxity. He was a Tory in Church and State." And he refers to the fact as strengthening his appeal to a Tory statesman, not to injure his own party by injustice to the revolted colonists of North America. It is hopeless, however, to expect

that such plain matter-of-fact reasonings will satisfy those who are bent on finding a sanction for their Romish theories in the venerable name of Wesley. We are fallen on times when the children of those who slew the prophets are not content with building their sepulchres, but insist that the martyrs themselves were also of the company of the persecutors. There was a meeting some three years ago in Kidderminster, the town associated with the memory not only of Richard Baxter's holy pastorate, but also of his unmerited persecution, for the purpose of unveiling a statue of the sainted man, and at it he was gravely claimed as a true and loyal son of the Church. So is it with Wesley. Bishops forbad him to preach and made him a Dissenter, but now that his followers have become a mighty power, on whose action may yet depend the fate of the Establishment, they are asked to believe that he was a High Churchman, and that if they would be loyal to him they must favour the encroachment of Ritualism.

X.

The distinction between Methodism and Congregationalism is, it need not be said, sufficiently marked and definite. But distinction does not necessarily mean antagonism, especially when neither party claims a *jus divinum* for its own system. There is no reason why Congregationalists should not adopt many methods which their brethren have found successful, even though the difference between them is one of principle and not of mere method. There are advantages in independency and advantages in connexionalism, and it is possible that, to some extent, they may be blended ;

but nevertheless they represent two entirely distinct tendencies. The cause of truth is more effectually served by the freest development than it could be by any suppression of the individuality of either, provided the spiritual unity which underlies this variety be preserved. Thirty years ago, when sectarian distinctions were sharper and sectarian feelings keener, Congregationalists, unfortunately, allowed themselves to be entangled in the internal troubles of Methodism, which led to the last secession. They had a chivalrous desire to aid the cause of freedom, and forgot that in differences of this character the interference of outsiders is pretty sure to furnish another proof of the wisdom of the old Book when it tells us that "He that passeth by and meddleth with strife that belongeth not to him is like one that taketh a dog by the ears." The mistake was not as ungenerous in spirit as it appeared to those who felt themselves misjudged and aggrieved.. Congregationalists at the time were too ready to regard themselves as the Paladins of liberty, and to come to the help of all who believed themselves oppressed. They looked too exclusively, perhaps, at those of whom they were the self-constituted champions, and did not remember that those whom they opposed were also brethren. The error is not likely to be repeated, and it is a pity that the recollection of so unfortunate an incident should ever be revived. Controversy between Congregationalists and Methodists is worse than a waste of time and energy, it is a division of those whose hearty union is necessary for the service demanded by Evangelical Protestantism at this great crisis.

That Congregationalism will make any considerable aggression on Methodism is just as improbable as that

Methodism will win many converts from Congregationalism ; nor is it desirable in either case. The two systems are adapted to two different temperaments, each of which developes best under conditions of a favourable kind. A man with decided individualism does not make a good Methodist, and only one who has been accustomed to the fervour of sympathetic fellowship and the discipline of a strict organization is not easily trained into a robust Congregationalist. The advantages of either system arrest the attention of interested observers on the other side, and striking some whom circumstances may have made specially sensitive to the defects of their own party, they pass from one camp to the other. But when the change has been accomplished, they then become sensible that there is good in what they have left, and that their new friends have also their faults and difficulties. There are, of course, cases in which conscientious feeling compels a man to transfer his ecclesiastical allegiance, and, whatever the direction in which he is led, his old friends should wish him increased happiness and usefulness in his new associations. But in a large number of cases the converts from one Church to another are spoiled for both, and certain it is that no wise man in any of our free Churches will encourage any work of proselytism.

Methodism has unquestionably laid hold of a grand idea in connection with the Church, and has worked it out with an ingenuity of tact, an intensity of feeling, a large-hearted devotion, and an unrelaxing diligence which are beyond all praise. A society thus welded together by the multitude of its common interests as well as by the depth of its spiritual sympathies naturally becomes a powerful organization. It is the

glory of Methodism that it has a compact, well-disciplined, and mighty force always available for purposes of aggression. It has thus opportunities for prosecuting its work on which other bodies of Christians, and especially Congregationalists, cannot look without feelings of admiration and of envy. Those who have experience of the difficulties attendant upon freedom, who are liable to have plans thwarted and success hindered by idiosyncrasy or eccentricity, and who are painfully conscious of the extreme difficulty of guiding large bodies of men accustomed to think and act for themselves, may sometimes wish that they had the power of the chiefs of a great society, who say to this man, "Come," and he cometh, and to another, "Go," and he goeth. But an organization of this perfect kind, if it has its advantages, has also its perils. And of these the Wesleyan society has had abundant experience in its past history. The successive conflicts which have broken out in its ranks, and have resulted in some considerable secessions, have been due to a conflict between the hierarchical and the popular elements. It says not a little for the tact of the leaders of Methodism as well as for the vitality of its principles that these breaches have been repaired, and that not only is the strength of the parent body to-day greater than ever, but that there have been approaches to reunion on the part of some of the alienated sections.

There is a growing tendency among enlightened thinkers, to whatever school they belong, to regard with anxiety, if not with alarm, the power wielded by great ecclesiastical organizations. A certain school amongst us advocates the continuance of the State Church in order that the power of the Government

may act as a check upon the ambitious designs of an aspiring priesthood. What the value of that control is, when a few recusant priests are able to hold the bench of bishops and the courts of law at bay, is not apparent. But as there is no better argument it is used. In the meantime, the Wesleyan Conference, one of the most powerful and uncontrolled clerical bodies in existence, having absolute supremacy in the denomination, has been quietly adjusting its arrangements, even at the sacrifice of some of its own prerogatives, in order to meet the wishes of the people and to adapt itself more thoroughly to the spirit of the times. The concessions have been great in themselves, they have been still greater in the principles which they involve. The lay element in Methodism has been growing in power, but that growth has involved no disturbance in the harmony of the body, and has strengthened instead of weakening the happy relations between the ministers and the people. The liberalized temper of Methodism during the last ten or fifteen years is, indeed, one of the most gratifying signs in the ecclesiastical situation. The force which it can employ for the conversion of men is indefinitely strengthened by the freer play of that popular sentiment in which it lives and moves and has its being. Frightened Conservatives may look on in alarm; cold cynics may sneer at spiritual extravagance; but lovers of a free Protestantism and a pure gospel will rejoice that a denomination which can do so much for both knows thus how to conserve its true strength, and to prepare for advances even surpassing in extent those which have marked the past period of its wonderful history.

LECTURE XII.

PRESBYTERIANISM.

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PRESBYTERIANISM.

LORD MACAULAY tells us that "the history of the English Reformation is full of strange problems," and that "the most prominent and extraordinary phenomenon which it presents to us is the gigantic strength of the government contrasted with the feebleness of religious parties." The principal reason of this is that the action of Henry VIII., in his breach with Rome, anticipated the conversion of the people to the Protestant faith. Henry dealt with his subjects as the old Saxon monarchs had been accustomed to deal with theirs. He was converted, not to Protestantism, but to Anti-Papalism, and he expected them to be converted too. Dean Hook thinks that the absence of any great Reformers, like Luther, or Calvin, or Knox, was at once the strength and the weakness of the English Reformation. The weakness which has resulted from it is perceptible enough, but what strength except that of State prestige was the result it is not easy to perceive. As Macaulay puts it, the faith of the nation seemed to depend on the personal inclination of the sovereign. It is a boast of some Anglicans that they cannot be called Cranmerites or Ridleyites as other classes of Protestants are called Lutherans, or Calvinists, or Wesleyans; but

when the English Reformation is traced to its real source such a boast is sufficiently hollow and pitiable, except in the case of Erastians. Nor is it a small loss to the Church that the men who might have been great amongst its founders were dwarfed, where they were not corrupted, by the conditions under which the Reformation was worked out, and that no master-mind exerted its power on the people to emancipate them from the darkness of mediæval superstition. A man with Knox's power and Knox's independence, educating English opinion, and exerting the same kind of influence on English Protestantism as Knox did on that of Scotland, would have given an entirely different character to the Church history of the nation. Latimer had something of his temper, but Latimer had not Knox's opportunities, nor indeed his power.

I.

Protestantism is not to be identified with the Erastianism of Henry VIII., nor is its history to be traced in the action of that monarch and his illustrious daughter. With the Protestant claim to free thought neither of them had the remotest sympathy, and though they adopted certain Protestant ideas, and in their mortal struggle with Rome often used the weapons which Protestantism had forged, they were both at heart, Henry perhaps more than Elizabeth, always attached to mediævalism in doctrine and ritual. Blunt, one of the ablest of modern High Church historians, treats all decided Protestants as enemies rather than as friends of the Anglican Church. The successors of the real Reformers are to be found in the ranks of Dissent, whether

of the Presbyterian or Congregational type, rather than within the circle of the Establishment.

The common notion is that Puritanism, and Congregationalism in particular, has always had its strength among the middle classes. But the theory of Mr. Brewer, whose survey of the period is marked by singular independence and careful research, is that the Established Church is the special product of the middle-class thought in this country. His account of the subject deserves careful examination from those who wish to trace our religious parties to their root, and to understand the relations between them. In his view Dissent, either Romish or Protestant has always had the chief hold on the upper and lower strata of the community, whereas in the intervening one is found the Anglican Church. Considering how absolute is the ascendancy of the Establishment among the aristocracy and the landed gentry, and how strongly Nonconformity has always been supposed to influence the middle classes, the statement is at first somewhat surprising, and it is only as its terms are defined that it is felt to be at all admissible.

"It was, then, to the rise and influence of the middle classes that the Reformation owed its origin; as the Reformed Church of England to this day reproduces in its work the salient characteristics of the middle classes. The civil war of the fifteenth century almost entirely annihilated the old feudal aristocracy, and the jealousy of the Tudors continued the work of destruction. The aristocracy that succeeded was of a different kind; it was inspired with different sentiments. It was taken from a lower class; it owed its elevation not to great territorial possessions in the first instance, but to per-

sonal, not to say menial, services rendered to the sovereign, which the old baronial peerage would have regarded with contempt. For the first time almost in our history even subordinate offices in the king's household, in his chamber, or his kitchen, were the passports to wealth or distinction. . . . To men who were thus indebted for their importance to habits of frugality, activity, and industry, brought less than any other under the direct influence of the Church, and weighing the worth of most things by its money value, the old Church, with its splendid ceremonials, its constant holidays, its wide waste places of idleness and devotion, its multiplied orders and intricate ritual, appeared little suited to the altered circumstances of the times. They listened with avidity to proposals for a more beneficial distribution of the Church's property; they began to reckon how the burthens of the State might be shifted from their own shoulders by a new appropriation of ecclesiastical and monastic endowments."[1]

This is not a very glowing account of the origin of a Church, and yet there can be no question that the men who impressed their own character on the English Reformation were of the type so well described by Mr. Brewer. But these are not what we understand by the middle classes. The commercial, the professional, the shopkeeping classes are those to whom this description more properly applies, and from them Puritanism was largely recruited. Anglicanism, as it was established by the statesmen of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, was a system which found as little favour with the more active and enterprising of the middle class as with the ancient aristocracy of the country. It was in that section of

[1] *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, pp. dclv.—dclvii.

society where the attractions of rank and fashion are specially felt that the Established Church had its most ardent supporters. Where the principles of Protestantism were better understood and had been more heartily accepted, or where there was a more spiritual or, as its enemies would describe it, a more mystic element in the religious life, there Puritanism prevailed. The more "practical" religion of the times, as Mr. Brewer might characterize it, gave the English Reformation its character so far as it is reflected in Acts of Parliament or in great ecclesiastical institutions; the more spiritual elements of Protestantism created Puritanism, in both its branches, Presbyterianism and Independency. The middle classes, if the term is to be made as comprehensive as Mr. Brewer makes it, gave birth to both the systems. Describing the origin of the Establishment, that learned scholar and most devoted Churchman says: "Its intense loyalty, its exaggerated respect for established order and decorum, its dislike of mysticism, its tendency to dwell exclusively on the practical side of Christianity, are so many indications of the class who watched over its birth and superintended its progress."[1] Turn this sentence round, and with a little qualification it furnishes a fair description of Dissent. Where loyalty did not grovel in servile adulation, where faith in liberty saved the love of order from degenerating into a blind worship of the past, where secularism did not so affect the conception of the Christian life as to take out of it the spiritual element, where practical godliness was based on a living communion of the soul with God, these were the classes who laid the foundations of English Puritanism.

[1] *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, p. dcliii.

Mr. Blunt, through the intensity of his High Church feeling, credits Dissent with an ancestry of which any body of Christians might well be proud. Wycliffe, the Lollards, Tyndale and his companions; in short, all who ever did a noble act for truth and liberty in those dark days of priestcraft and superstition, are the "anti-Church party" from whom Nonconformists may trace their descent. The one anxiety of the clerical historian is to prove that his own Church has no relations with them. The principles of Wycliffe, according to this author and Archdeacon Hardwicke, whose words he quotes and endorses, did not sensibly, affect the English Reformation, but it would seem that they scattered the seeds of Dissent. "The spirit which had arisen among Wycliffe's followers was laid, and when the bright light of a true Reformation began to dawn it was at once obscured by the clouds of sectarianism which were already floating in its pathway."[1] Bilney and Tyndale, all the "heretics" who suffered for conscience' sake in the reign of Henry VIII., were of the anti-Church party. The Established Church knows nothing of them. The Reformation "was in the main effected upon conservative and constitutional principles," but men like Wycliffe, Garret, Bilney, Frith, and others of the same character (not excluding even Latimer and Hooper, whose episcopal position never stifled their true Protestant convictions), laid, on the showing of Mr. Blunt, "the foundations of that sectarian spirit which has been for three centuries known by the name of Protestantism, Puritanism, Nonconformity, and Dissent, and which is in reality as strongly antagonistic to the fundamental principles of the Church of England

[1] Blunt's *Reformation*, p. 524.

as to those of the Church of Rome."[1] The views of these two writers, both of them authorities on behalf of the Church of England, though not of precisely the same school of thought, are in perfect coincidence here. They agree that that Church is not a representative of Protestantism, and that if we wish to find that we must seek it in the ranks of Dissent.

The Anglican Church, then, as thus described by its champions, was the Church of a plutocracy, conservative and practical, disposed to treat religious sentiment as fanaticism, and independence of thought as approaching to treason. On the other side, Mr. Blunt tells us, Protestants like Tyndale "established a form of 'religious opinion' (the inverted commas indicate the contempt with which he, as a firm believer in authority, treats the suggestion of the formation of religious opinion by the people) among the rising middle class, who were socially opposed to the clergy, and being very imperfectly educated, were easily seduced by the racy English of a Reformation Cobbett; and the form of religious opinion so established has been the atmosphere in which all subsequent plantations of unbelief have spread abroad their branches and lustily thriven in their unfruitful leafiness."[2] This tracing of our lineage by an unfriendly hand is extremely suggestive. The true Protestant party has from the beginning taken a position very much resembling that of English Nonconformists. It is not pretended that these Reformers held our exact theological or ecclesiastical views, but in their protests against human authority, in their humble reverence for the Word of God, in their assertion of liberty, and their exercise of the rights of conscience, they

[1] Blunt's *Reformation*, p. 523. [2] Ibid. pp. 549, 550.

were the progenitors of English Protestantism in both its branches. It was a true instinct which led Dr. Vaughan, than whom Nonconformity has not had a more intelligent, far-seeing, and large-hearted champion in our times, to fix upon Wycliffe as the earliest representative of principles that lay very near his own heart. It is now sought by Church historians to fasten the relationship upon Dissenters as a stigma; but it it is accepted as a glory, not a reproach. Even the unpleasant name of the "anti-Church party" need not act as a scare. All that it means is that, from the days of Wycliffe downwards, there has always been a party in the country who have refused to allow the Church to exercise supremacy over reason and conscience. It has been called by different names, it has assumed different phases at successive periods in its history, it has grown, as a party accepting such principles might be expected to grow, in its conceptions of liberty; but whether called Lollardism, Protestantism, Puritanism, Presbyterianism, or Congregationalism, it has been essentially one, contending for the same ideas, and seeking in the main the same ends. Those who took part in the earlier struggles may have failed to perceive how far their own principles would carry them, but the spirit which made them what they were in their times would have carried them still further in ours. Between us are centuries of difficulty, of conflict, and of progress, and yet in the midst of all the changes that have been wrought, and that may seem to divide us, we can join hands with them, and feel that we form parts of one army.

II.

Presbyterianism and Congregationalism were thus two different branches from the same root, and represented diversities of opinion, of taste, and of temperament such as were sure to arise as soon as the freedom of Protestant inquiry began to have free play. They were agreed in their recognition of the supremacy of Scripture, in their repudiation of tradition as a rule of faith, in their assertion of the rights of the individual conscience, in their revolt against the hierarchy, in their preference of a spiritual to a ceremonial religion, in their recognition of the power of the laity in the Church, and in general in their opposition to everything that savoured of Romish corruption. In the view of both alike the Holy Catholic Church had apostatized from the Christian faith, and it was their aim to restore that faith in its purity and simplicity. Their endeavour was to rescue Christian doctrine from the corruptions of scholastic and papal theology, to purge Christian worship of the "blasphemous fables" associated with the Mass, to recover the lost freedom of the Christian people, and reassert the sole and supreme authority of Christ in His own Church. Their theology was at first, to a large extent, identical, and both of them accepted the Calvinistic doctrine relative to salvation and had tendencies towards the Zwinglian theory of the sacrament. The difference between them had relation apparently only to questions of polity, but that itself was due to a more radical difference in spirit. The Presbyterian was the more aristocratic, the Congregational the democratic, theory of Church government. In both, the people were, in the ultimate issue, the governing power, but in the one the

power was exercised directly in the separate assembly, in the other mediately by means of representation in presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies.

The development was a perfectly natural one, and was manifested at a very early period in the history of the Reformation. First, there were Puritans, who sought to conform the National Church to their own type, who were content to accept a modified form of Episcopacy, and who would have had an Established Church such as might have satisfied our modern Evangelicals of the most advanced order. Then there was a class who felt that the influence of Episcopacy had been so disastrous to the interests of the Church that the repetition of an episcopal experiment was too perilous a venture, and who were gradually driven, partly by the force of circumstances, and partly by the strength of convictions, into a more decided position of antagonism. They dreaded prelacy, but were not prepared absolutely to trust the people. They adopted therefore a Presbyterian form of Church government. Ultimately a third class, prepared to follow out their Church principles to their final issue, established purely Independent Churches. At the commencement of the struggle with Charles I., the first class was predominant, for most of the early parliamentary leaders cherished the hope of establishing a moderate Episcopacy. Gradually the Presbyterians, greatly aided by the support they received from Scotland, acquired predominance; but as the strife grew hotter, the men of more thorough-going principle and more uncompromising temper gradually extended their influence, until ultimately it became paramount. It would be uncandid not to recognize the great service which the Presbyterians did in this great conflict for liberty. The time arrived

when they became afraid of the work which they had themselves accomplished, and recoiled from the issue to which it was evidently tending. But this must not make us forget that at a critical point in the struggle for English liberty their high character, their firm adherence to principle, and even their cautious moderation, were of inestimable service to the Protestant cause. They have been accused, not without justice, of intolerance, and there can be no doubt that their intention was to establish a Presbyterian Church in England; but their errors were the errors of their age, at least as much as of their system, and even their errors must not prevent us from recognizing the important service which they rendered at a time when that service was most valuable.

Presbyterianism naturally repelled the advanced spirits of the times, more disgusted by its endeavours to climb up into the place which prelacy had occupied than by prelacy itself. "New presbyter is but old priest writ large," said Milton, and his voice, like that of his great chief, was raised on behalf of a more searching reform and a more complete emancipation of the Church of Christ from the bonds in which the statecraft of both parties would have confined it. What benefit was ultimately derived by English liberty from the struggle was due to the influence which the more robust principles of Independency exerted, and hence it was that when the protracted strife was ended by the accession of William III. and the Act of Toleration, the Presbyterianism which, at its commencement, had been beyond all comparison the most powerful element of English Puritanism, either disappeared altogether or was perpetuated in a denomination which had renounced

the distinctive theology of Puritanism. From that period it is Congregationalism—Baptist and Pædobaptist—which in England has represented that love of Evangelical faith and that devotion to the cause of political and ecclesiastical freedom which were characteristic of Puritanism in its palmiest days.

The complete reversal of the positions of the Presbyterians and Independents in the course of half a century is a curious fact, whatever the inferences to be drawn from it. It would seem to suggest that in the conflict for spiritual freedom the resistance to the encroachments of authority forces men into the assertion of absolute independence. As an ecclesiastical system, Presbyterianism did not find a congenial soil in the England of the seventeenth century, and its politics were discredited, as those of the middle party are pretty sure to be discredited in a revolutionary period. That there was then as now a large section of English Christians repelled from the State Church by the Erastianism of its polity, the sacramental teachings of its liturgy, and the anti-Protestant spirit which had become so powerful within it, but who loved the orderly arrangement which Presbyterianism furnished, and had not sufficient faith either in God or man to trust in the free action of Christian communities, is an unquestionable fact. What Congregationalism can do to re-assure them will be considered subsequently. The marvel, at first sight, is how it came to pass that Presbyterianism, with its power of appealing to this class, should have left Congregationalism as the sole representative of Evangelical Dissent. The answer may possibly be found in the general decay of religious earnestness in the earlier parts of the eighteenth century—a decay in which the

Independent Churches certainly did not share to the same extent as the Presbyterian societies. Presbyterianism had become wealthy and prosperous, and was strongly infected by the easy temper of the times. Some of its members cast off the Evangelical faith, others felt that they cared no longer to maintain their testimony against prelacy, and the remnant were absorbed in Congregationalism, and became a conservaitve element in the Churches. With the great Revival came the establishment of Methodism, which is Presbyterianism under another name, and, of course, with important modifications. The Calvinistic Methodists in Wales have recognized this fact, and now call themselves Welsh Presbyterians, and the great Wesleyan body in England might almost as correctly be described as Arminian Presbyterians. They have certainly gathered into their community the great majority of the class referred to—the strong Protestants, who have no love for priests and sacramental grace, but are afraid of a spiritual democracy. We come back to the old principle in relation to all government, secular and spiritual alike, that there are but three distinct types, and all existing forms are but varieties of these original ideas.

III.

The Presbyterianism which is among us to-day, with able ministers and active Churches, constituting a strong and aggressive organization, has no lineal descent from the Presbyterianism which defied Charles and Laud, and seemed at one time about to become the national religion of England. It is a distinctly Scottish system, for whose work there is so much room in this country, that

all faithful servants of Christ may heartily rejoice in the advent of such helpers. Even if some of its representatives should retain some of that feeling against Congregationalism which was so keen in the seventeenth, but has surely become an anchronism in the nineteenth century, and in their zeal for Calvinism, which enjoys so undisputed a supremacy in the northern part of the island, should betray a too anxious jealousy about the orthodoxy of Congregationalists, that criticism may be easily endured. Congregationalism can hold its own, and do its proper service without renewing the conflicts of former times between two parties, neither of which can weaken the other without inflicting a proportionate injury on the common interests which ought to be infinitely dearer to both than any sectarian advantage.

The revival of Presbyterianism in England is part of that great spiritual movement in Scotch Presbyterianism of which the establishment of the Free Church was the most conspicuous manifestation. The story of the great secession which has decided the fate of the Scottish Establishment is full of lessons of instruction, an emphatic warning to Erastians as to the weakness of the defences in which they put their trust to resist the sweep of a strong current of spiritual earnestness; a rebuke to faithless servants of conscience who tremble to face the risks of freedom and independence; an encouragement to all who have to decide whether they will rest on the support of Cæsar or trust in the living God. The grievance of the Scotch Evangelicals was that of the English Tractarians. The theory of the rights of the Church, common to both of them, was in direct contravention of the authority claimed and exercised by the State. Their views as to the policy of

the Church, and as to the mode in which its will was to be ascertained, were in direct antagonism, but they were agreed as to the odious character of the tyranny which the State exercised. In Scotland the State assumed the right to impose ministers upon a reluctant people, in England it seeks to take away a ritual from a priesthood which venerates it as Catholic. But in both cases alike the State is felt to be usurping a power to which it had no claim, and is opposed accordingly.

The resistance offered by the High Anglicans to-day is based on the same principle as that which led to the secession of the Free Church. In neither case is the opposition to the control of the State an opposition to State Establishments, for, on the contrary, both maintain that it is the duty of the secular power to support the Church and leave it to govern itself. But here the resemblance between the two parties ceases. The Presbyterians had a grander object to secure than the restoration of an imposing ceremonial, and were contending for a principle more vital and precious than the figment of "Catholic" authority. Their vindication of the rights of Christian people gives their contention a character more noble and more in harmony with the genius of the age than could belong to a struggle for the independence of a Church whose law was to be found in the traditions of antiquity. Up to this point the two parties have exhibited a still more marked difference in policy and conduct. The Anglicans have only protested, the sturdy Scotchmen translated their protest into action. The former have contented themselves with meetings and resolutions, words of indignation, and (here and there) with an unnecessary and unprofitable provocation to imprisonment, memorials for freedom, or lawless resist-

ance to constituted authority. The latter accepted the judgment of the Courts as final, and as they could not submit, took the course of Christian manliness by abandoning an Establishment which was governed by other law than that of Christ. There was no necessity for Dr. Chalmers and his friends to leave a Church which had a hold upon their imaginations and their hearts at least as strong as that of the Anglicans over its own supporters. They had simply to resign themselves to the inevitable action of the law and continue their ministry, mourning that the rights of patrons should be so absolute and that the voice of the people should not be heard. They were not required to alter either preaching or mode of worship, they had only to acquiesce in the exercise of a right of patronage which they held to be contrary to the New Testament. The demands made on these Presbyterians were thus infinitely less than those enforced upon an Anglican priest, when he is required to sacrifice the symbolism of his office and the sacrament to which he attaches such importance. But rather than comply with them, these Scotch clergymen forsook their beloved churches and pleasant manses, and went forth not knowing whither they went, but obeying the voice of conscience and following the lead of God.

It is extremely suggestive that the two leading ecclesiastical events of the period should both be so largely due to the action of similar causes, and should both afford illustrations so striking of the difficulty which seems to be increasingly felt of holding new wine in old bottles, or of patching an old garment with new cloth. But between the spirit and results of the two there is much more of contrast than of resemblance. The influence of High

Anglicanism has not extended beyond a limited circle, that of a revived Presbyterianism touched the heart of the whole nation, and raised the level of its entire religious life. The enthusiasm which the Free Church leaders were able to awaken would have been impossible but for the awakened spiritual sentiment to which they were able to appeal. Men are not roused to such earnestness about disputed questions of Church authority as leads to self-denying liberality and heroic self-sacrifice who have not strong religious convictions. Had a state of cold formalism prevailed in Scotland the secession would have been impossible. In subsequent stages of such great struggles, political and even personal motives may intrude and even become predominant, but the original inspiration must certainly come from a purer source. It was so in the case of the Oxford movement, whose strong reactionary politics would have failed to produce any great result but for the intense religious sentiment which was behind. Still more was it so in the Church of Scotland. It was the quickening of spiritual life which led to that noble revolt against the tyranny by which the State held the Church in bondage The rule of the State in the Church of Scotland was, indeed, but as the light touch of the finger as compared with the pressure of the loins in the Church of England. But, such as it was, it became intolerable to men who had been called to the liberty of the children of God, and were so keenly alive to the preciousness of the inheritance that they could not compromise its rights by yielding one of them to the pretensions of Cæsar.

The leaders of the movement were men who had previously distinguished themselves for their zeal in the promotion of vital godliness and the revival of the

evangelistic work of the Church. Dr. Chalmers, who was its heart and soul, was one of the most eloquent preachers and the most energetic Christian workers of his age. Not only had he given a fresh impetus and power to the Evangelical school in the Scotch Church by the fervour with which he proclaimed the gospel, but he had set an example of parochial administration and work which, if extensively imitated, might have enabled the Scottish Church to reclaim some of the wild wastes of paganism to be found in its great towns and to adapt the Establishment to the work of the nation. The last work which Chalmers would have anticipated for himself was the organization of a secession from that State Church of which he had been the most gallant and successful defender. The position was unquestionably accepted with extreme reluctance, and in deference only to the constraining power of conscience. Dr. Chalmers came out of the Established Church only that he might better serve Christ and his country.

The service which he and his noble associates were thus able to render cannot well be over-estimated. Their manifestation of the supremacy of conscience was itself an incalculable gain, but this is only part of the great benefit which the nation has reaped from their faithfulness and zeal. Around Chalmers stood a noble band—Candlish, Welsh, and Cunningham, eminent as divines; Guthrie, a prince among preachers, and a leader among philanthropists, and, not to mention a host of minor celebrities, the fervid, high-principled, and eloquent journalist, Hugh Miller. These men did not simply organize a compact and resolute opposition, infuse into a whole party something of their own spirit and determination, maintain the struggle through all its changing

phases, and, finally, lead out of the State Church hundreds of its best and noblest men, but founded a Church which is now the most powerful in the country. The spectacle of that memorable procession down the Castle Hill, on the 18th of May, 1843, was one in every way fitted to impress a nation. It was the public and scornful repudiation of Erastian rule by men who were fully alive to the privation and suffering which their act might entail upon themselves, but who resolved to brave it all rather than bow their knee to the idol which the State had set up. It was nearly two centuries since the world had seen such an exhibition of loyalty to principle, and it came opportunely to remind a scoffing age that faith had not forsaken the earth. It is very possible for us all to depreciate such a display of moral heroism, simply because it is very difficult for men at any time to realize the grandeur of the events passing around them. It is perfectly true that at the commencement of the controversy the majority could not have foreseen its ultimate results, and that, could they have been anticipated, not a few would have shrunk from entering on the struggle. And it is even possible that of those who maintained it to the bitter end there were some who hesitated and trembled before taking the final step. But how little do all these captious criticisms detract from the grandeur of a proceeding which for moral nobility is unique—at all events, in our own time. Had the work of the Free Church leaders, however, been destructive only, it would not have secured that permanent honour which at present belongs to it. In the organization and early work of the new Church which they founded they exerted an influence on all Presbyterian, and to some extent on all Christian com-

munities. It is impossible to travel in any part of Scotland without being struck with the practical evidences of the statesmanlike wisdom, the enterprising spirit and munificent liberality by which the first workers in the Free Church were distinguished. In the remote Highland villages, as well as in the larger towns, the memorials of its great work are to be found. The quiet and unpretending sanctuary, not marked by great architectural beauty, and possibly even already giving evidence of the economy and rapidity with which it was built, the school, and the homely and comfortable manse, with its pleasant garden and little bit of glebe, are standing proofs of the earnestness and self-denial of men on whom fell so unexpectedly the burden of providing the entire machinery of the people's church. The records of the time prove that if Scotland in the nineteenth century has had its heroes, it has also had its persecutors, who, when they had opportunity and power, did not lack the will to coerce the consciences of their dependants. The attempt of some of the Scottish nobles and magnates to crush the young community will long remain a blot upon their escutcheon. But such opposition had been foreseen, and was conquered by the holy passion and devoted work of a man of rare nobility of spirit, of dauntless courage and an energy that was almost Herculean —Thomas Guthrie. The Free Church manses of the country are his enduring monuments, and as one visits these hospitable and Christian homes, it is impossible not to think of the heroic worker who took on himself the burden of his poorer brethren, and who spared neither time nor strength in order that he might deliver them from the sufferings to which their loyalty to conscience had doomed them. The contrast is striking between

the petty, even though titled, tyrants who took advantage of their power over the soil of a district or a county, and refused their tenants a site for their house of prayer or their minister's dwelling, and this man of sanctified genius, who sacrificed the comforts of his own home, the congenial labours of his study and his pulpit, and even his health itself, in order not only to repair the wrong which they had done, but also to mitigate the difficulties and troubles which his brethren were enduring for conscience' sake. Is it wonderful that the heart of the people has gone away from those once supposed to be their chiefs and has gathered round the men who have proved them their true teachers and guides? Is it surprising that the old system of feudalism is tottering and that the force of the living Presbyterianism of the Churches is as real as ever?

IV.

To the revived zeal of Scotch Presbyterianism may be traced the endeavour to revive the system in England. Only thirty years ago the Presbyterian Churches in England were few and feeble. The present English Presbyterian Church, indeed, only dates back to 1876. Prior to 1844, the Presbyterian communities of this country were merely branches of the Scotch Churches, but when the influence of the Free Church extended across the Border, and produced a division among the adherents of the Church of Scotland here, corresponding with that which had taken place on the other side the Tweed, the new Church which was founded assumed a distinctly English character, and constituted themselves on an independent basis. In 1877 this new Church and

the Churches of the United Presbyterian communion united for the formation of a distinctly English Presbyterian Church, which has unquestionably prosecuted its work with great vigour and considerable success.

Whether it is to produce a very strong impression upon the public mind of England is one of those points upon which it would be rash to hazard any confident opinion. In the existing state of dissatisfaction among large numbers of the laity of the Anglican Church, it might be anticipated that considerable numbers would secede from that community and seek a freer fellowship, in which the purity of Protestantism would be more jealously conserved and Christian truth in its simplicity and fulness be more clearly proclaimed. To men of this type the new Presbyterian Church seems to present attractions which no other Dissenting community possesses. Its Scotch lineage may be in its favour, as it preserves it from the reproach attaching to actual secession from the Church of England. It is doubtless a Dissenting community, and its Dissent must necessarily be pronounced and even emphatic, but it has not about it the same offensive attitude as Dissent born on English soil, which has either the reproach or the glory—as it may be esteemed—of English traditions, and to which consequently there attaches an odium which does not rest upon Dissent of an external origin. Presbyterianism also has about it an air of authority which is a strong recommendation to those who have been accustomed to the dignity of a hierarchy and the constant restraint of authority. It seems at least to provide some breakwater against the power of the democracy, and there are those to whom nothing is so impossible as faith in the people, and nothing so odious as democratic institutions.

Congregationalists, at all events, have no reason to grudge any success which Presbyterians may achieve in this direction. There is scope and room enough for both in this great country, with its infinite variety of tendency and opinion—as marked in the Church as in the world. If Presbyterianism can attract to Dissent any class of people who would otherwise throw the weight of their influence on the side of Erastianism or Ritualism, the cause of truth is the distinct gainer. Even the attempt on the part of certain Presbyterians to pose as the champions of orthodoxy *par excellence* need not disturb those Congregationalists with whom they are inviting an invidious comparison. In view of the past history of the two systems in this country, Congregationalists have certainly no reason to fear any comparison that may be instituted between them ; and Presbyterians must suppose those whom they address strangely ignorant of the facts if they hope to persuade them that theirs is the system which is the one safeguard of Evangelical truth. Undoubtedly Presbyterianism depends more upon elaborate formularies and strict subscription ; but there is little proof that restrictions of that kind are the best defences for the purity of a creed. Experience seems to tell altogether in a contrary direction. The Presbyterian Churches of Scotland at this moment are not free from those internal difficulties with which some of their champions are disposed to reproach Congregationalism. Still here are two differing systems. Congregationalists are disposed to exercise more faith in freedom, while Presbyterians on the other side attach more value to creeds and to confessions. The land is wide, and it is simply impossible that either of us, or both of us

together, can fully possess it. A policy of proselytism, a policy which promotes the advantage of one Church by depreciating the character and service of another, a policy of exclusiveness, priding itself upon some assumed superiority either in doctrine or character, a policy of compromise which seeks to conciliate opposite parties at the same time, most of all a policy of reaction, would be fatal to the success of any Church. Presbyterianism has no need to adopt it, and if unhappily a spirit of narrowness and jealousy should prevail in its councils, in opposition to the views of its wisest and best men, it can have no right to anticipate a glorious future. But if, on the contrary, it will take its place side by side with other Free Church systems, cultivating those fraternal relations which ought to prevail throughout the entire brotherhood, and yet doing its own work according to its own ideas, it will be hailed by all sister Churches, and by none more than by Congregationalists, as bringing a great accession of force to the cause of Evangelical doctrine and Christian liberty.

LECTURE XIII.

CONGREGATIONALISM.

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CONGREGATIONALISM is the oldest form of English Dissent, and it is also the most pronounced in principle and resolute in purpose. It is not co-extensive with political dissent, for there is a numerous and increasing body of politicians who object to Erastianism, that is, to the political constitution of the National Church, but who have no sympathy with the theological doctrines or ecclesiastical arrangements of Independent Churches. But it is, in its essence, political Dissent, for the root-principle of its whole constitution is incompatible with the existence of a State Church. There is no reason in the nature of things why any of our other Church systems might not become a "public" Church; that is, a Church which theoretically includes the nation, and is supported and governed by the nation. Presbyterianism is the National Church system of Scotland, and there is nothing in the fundamental principles of Methodism to prevent it from accepting a similar position in England. But Congregationalism must abjure the truth on which its whole economy is based before it could enter into any alliance with the State.

I.

Canon Curteis describes its "leading idea" as being the "purity of the Church, especially in its external

relations," and the "methods adopted" "dissolution of the ecclesiastical polity into a multitude of small republics." If the last definition were so far modified as to convey the idea that the effect of Independency was to restore the original type of small republics which had been lost in an imposing hierarchy, and so to show that the ecclesiastical monarchists were the innovators, there need be no objection to the statement. Congregationalism does seek to establish self-governing societies which may be called "republics," and as Canon Curteis, more honourable and candid than some of its other critics, frankly acknowledges, the idea on which these societies are to be constituted is the "purity of the Church." It is thus, in its very nature, antagonistic to a State Church. As to public endowment—if any State were found so foolish as to endow a Church without exercising any control even over the disposal of its own grants—its acceptance might be treated as a matter of expediency on which difference of opinion might exist, but for the great law of righteousness which would forbid a Church to receive for its own sectarian purposes money for which men of all varieties of religious opinion have been taxed, and for the spirit of Christian manliness and self-reliance which would lead a Church to take the attitude of the old Hebrew when he said, "I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him." But as to public control, that is inadmissible on the terms on which an Independent Church is constituted.

It is not strictly true, as stated in a *Cyclopædia of Religious Denominations*, from which the Bampton

lecturer is fond of quoting, but which seems to be marked by the inaccuracy that so often accompanies an assumed omniscience, that "all questions of faith, discipline, and membership are to be settled by its members." Congregational Churches have accepted the law of Christ as its supreme rule, and they exist only for the purpose of administering that. In one sense it is true that "practically every Church is at liberty to hold any theological opinions, and to adopt any mode of worship," but even this must be understood with limitations. Congregationalism is not only a Christian, but also an Evangelical and a Protestant system. A self-governing and self-supporting body is, no doubt, free to make what regulations it pleases. There are no Church Courts in Congregationalism which can interfere with the individual community, for the utmost which any adverse action of Association or Union could do would be to leave a dissentient outside its own voluntary confederation. The law of the land certainly can enforce the conditions of a trust-deed, but that only means that it can determine the right of a minister to teach or of a congregation to worship in a particular building, or, in the very few cases where some endowment is attached, the right to enjoy its benefit. An Independent community has within these limitations the power of deciding as to its creed, formularies, and discipline. But if, in the exercise of this discretion, it should adopt the creed of Positivism, it might of course still describe itself as a Congregational Church, just as it might resolve on the celebration of Mass and still cling to the old name of which no external authority could deprive it. But that in either case it would be a Congregational Church in any true sense of the word is what no candid controver-

sialist would maintain. Congregationalism is an historic term and has a definite historic signification. Any man, or any community, has the right to employ the word in a way that is without precedent, but the effect of such license of speech is extremely misleading if it be used for any polemic purpose.

To do Canon Curteis justice, he does not seem to have had any such object in the citation, but it was necessary, at the very outset, to make this statement as to the basis on which Congregationalism rests. He says very truly that "the cradle in which Independency was nurtured was the Nonconforming Puritanism of the sixteenth century," and that being so, it is superfluous to say that it had a definite doctrinal foundation. The polity was founded on the doctrine, and the antagonism to the Established Church on the polity. The Church was to be constituted of all who were in Christ Jesus, "called to be saints," and as Christ was the only ruler of that Church, the admission of any human authority was an act of disloyalty to Him. Congregationalism thus became of necessity the antagonist of a State Church. The opposition might be silent and passive, or active, outspoken, and aggressive, but it was there. The system is a proclamation of the right of private judgment; and that right, for the exercise of which there is responsibility to Christ alone, is in the teeth of the claims put forth by the State. The men who hold the principle may be content with the liberty they enjoy of acting upon it in the formation of separate communities, or they may feel that they cannot thus acquiesce in a state of things which, in their conscience, they believe to be contrary to the will of God, and may therefore engage in aggressive effort for the overthrow of the Establishment. It is

political Dissent in the first case as much as in the second, and the difference between them is one solely of policy not principle.

II.

Canon Curteis says that Congregationalism, "on its own political ground, has deservedly won its way to the front rank among all Dissenting bodies,"[1] and when it is remembered that Congregationalism has a Baptist and a Pædobaptist section, which are agreed except as to the one question of a sacrament, the truth of the frank acknowledgment is even more apparent. When he adds that it "frankly inscribes upon its banner, Dissent for its own sake, and as a principle, not as a makeshift or a necessity," he allows his imagination to lead him away from the dull commonplaces of fact. Instead of rejoicing in their Dissent, Congregationalists feel that it is a political injustice that the law should lay on them the necessity of protest, and should force them into the invidious position of proclaiming dissent from others whom they heartily respect. They are Dissenters because the law has made them so, and they complain that in this the law has violated the true principles of equality. If Dissent is blazoned as the legend on their banner, it is not their hands which have woven the inscription, but rather those of law-makers, who, in setting up a national standard of belief, have compelled a number of men either to deny the truth or to unfurl the flag of Dissent. If Nonconformity, in the course of its long and arduous struggle, has developed any harsh and ungenial qualities, if it has shown any tendencies to narrowness or

[1] Curteis, *Bampton Lecture*, p. 41.

separatism, if there have been in it too many signs of that watchful jealousy which has provoked the sneers of the "prophet of culture," the blame rests mainly on those who rudely thrust it out of the pale of national life, and deprived it of the influences which might have softened its asperities and extracted from it any element of bitterness. It may be that Congregationalism, while it has the robustness of a sturdy oak, has nevertheless gnarled and knotted branches, which testify to the fierce storms amid which it has grown up. A considerable part of its lifetime has been spent in keen struggle, and the camp is not the sphere in which the gentler graces are most likely to flourish. Congregationalists are not ashamed of the part they have played in these polemics. Like others, they are doubtless subject to self-delusion, and it may be that they are deceiving themselves in the belief that in their mode of conducting controversy they have no need to fear comparison with any of their assailants. But one thing, at all events, is certain. They have so little love for an attitude of hostility towards any body of Christians that they are intent on removing the unfair legislation which, by constituting Episcopalianism the Church, degrades the adherents of all other systems to the rank of Dissent.

But while the supremacy lasts, the opposition—that is, the Dissent—lasts, and the Anglican Church recognizes Congregationalism as its most formidable opponent. The relations between the two systems are somewhat curious. The sacerdotalism of the High Church party can have no more uncompromising opponent than Congregationalism, which has no reserves of any kind to make, but regards all the servants of Christ as standing on the same level, with diversity of gifts, and therefore of

office, but without any distinction of order or inequality of privilege. Yet even between these two there has somehow been revealed a strange and subtle affinity, misunderstood and misrepresented by those who have not studied it in a sympathetic spirit, and who have therefore attributed it to purely factious or sectarian motives, but not surprising to those who realize the importance both attach to the spiritual conception of the Church of Christ and His own right over it. The one holds that this spiritual power is to be exercised by priests, the true representatives of the Holy Catholic Church, the other believes in the rule of the people among whom Christ dwells by His Spirit, and whose action is designed to be an act only of obedience to His will. They are decided antagonists, but antagonists who have so much of common ground that each is able to appreciate the strength of the position held by the other. Any coalition possible between them can be but of a temporary, a political, and a negative kind, being directed against the usurpation of the State; but even that can only take place on condition that those who repudiate the control of the State will be prepared to part with the distinctions and emoluments it confers. None would be more sturdy champions of the Ritualists were they threatened with any invasion of liberty than the Congregationalists, but none would more strenuously resist any attempt to combine the retention of class privilege with the relaxation of the accompanying control.

The High Anglican, however, is not the true representative of that spirit of compromise which the Establishment was intended to embody. Rather is he the type of one of the extremes which that compromise was intended to harmonize.

III.

Congregationalism (again be it said), including its two separate branches, is the most powerful representative of the old Puritanism. For Puritanism had its political as well as its religious side, and Congregationalism has always maintained the same position. To suppose that its object is to establish a number of self-contained Churches, whose chief glory is that no one can claim a right to interfere with them, is, to say the least, to take a very narrow view of its teaching and mission. Dr. Dexter has truly described it in a brief sentence as the "democratic form of Church government." It does not necessarily follow that those who accept the rule of the people in a Church composed of the servants of Christ who have first yielded themselves to the same Lord themselves, would be prepared to advocate it in a State which could have no guarantee for the principles or character of its citizens. But, as a matter of fact, those who have been accustomed to this popular form of Church rule have also enrolled themselves in the party of political freedom and progress. It is not too much to say that there has not been a solitary conflict for liberty and righteousness in which English Congregationalists have not been on the popular side.

It does not lie within the compass of a lecture like this to trace the rise of Congregationalism in England, to tell the history of its work and struggle, or to vindicate it from those aspersions of its enemies which have at all times been so freely directed against it. Its policy has always been "thorough," and that itself has been sufficient to excite the violent opposition of large classes who believe in compromise, while others dislike the

enunciation of principles which strike at the root of favourite pretensions of their own. But despite the opposition, and despite the further fact that it has always been the creed of a minority, Congregationalism has played a part in the history of the nation, the value of which to English freedom even its keenest critics are compelled to confess. The rapid growth of its power, and the wide extent of the influence which it exerted in the Commonwealth period, was very remarkable. At the beginning of the conflict between king and parliament it was a force so feeble and obscure as hardly to be taken into account. When the first period of the war was closed by the victory of Naseby, or a little later by the defeat of the second Charles at Worcester, Independency was master of the situation. This was, of course, a military triumph, but the triumph of arms—the necessity for which all true friends of their country regret—would have been impossible but for the previous moral victory of opinion. If Independency had not spread in the nation it could not have made an army, or inspired it with that heroic devotion which made the Ironsides of Cromwell one of the most illustrious examples of English chivalry and courage.

At that time the greatest minds in England did homage to its principles. Cromwell and Milton are alone sufficient to give a true grandeur to the age in which they lived, and the country of which they were such distinguished ornaments. Seldom, if ever, have two men with intellects so massive, with characteristics so different, and yet each with gifts so extraordinary in his own sphere, been united together in the service of a country. They were in advance of an age which could make an idol of Charles II., and revel in the profligacy

and vice to which his restoration led the way. But they stand out in the records of history, towering above not only their own contemporaries, but the ecclesiastics and statesmen of later times, who have scoffed and sneered at greatness they could not measure or even understand—

> "petty men
> Walk under their huge legs, and peep about
> To find themselves dishonourable graves."

They were both Independents.

Congregationalism grew rapidly in the seventeenth century because it had grasped a great truth, which was felt to be the mightiest force for resisting the evils which had come upon Church and State. A single year "saw in London alone the rise of fourscore congregations of several sectaries," as Bishop Hall scornfully tells us, "instructed by guides fit for them — cobblers, tailors, felt-makers, and such-like trash.'" [1] The Bishop writes as a heathen hierarch might have written of the "fishermen, publicans, and such-like trash," who were the first bishops of the Church in which he was a prelate. He but reflects, however, that temper in Anglicanism which has done so much first to increase the power of Dissent, and then to introduce bitterness into its controversy with the Establishment. At this time, however (1646), Mr. Green adds, "But little religious weight could be attributed as yet to the Congregational movement. Baxter at this time had not heard of the existence of any Independents. Milton, in his earlier pamphlets, shows no signs of their influence. Of the hundred and five ministers present in the Westminster Assembly, only five were Congregational in sympathy, and these

[1] Green's *History of the English People*, vol. iii. p. 235.

were all returned refugees from Holland. Among the hundred and twenty London ministers in 1643, but three were suspected of leaning towards the sectaries." [1] Yet from such small beginnings there was developed a force which gave a character to the Revolution, secured a decisive triumph over the king, and did a work the traces of which are distinct and marked in the constitutional character of English political life as well as in the positive enactments of the statute book.

Canon Curteis, who shows a commendable desire to be fair towards Independents, and who, if he ever fails, fails because he is not able to free himself wholly from the spirit which is characteristic of an English cleric, in whose eyes the Established Church is an institution with Divine sanctions, and to whom dissent from it is either a sin as grievous as that of idolatry or witchcraft, or an exhibition of stupidity so dense as to be incomprehensible, says that "Puritan vigour and obstinacy" warded off the "threatening danger of a Stuart autocracy." There was some other danger from which the nation was delivered by "the welding and organizing instincts of the Churchman," but on that point the Canon is not so clear as his own friends might desire. He pictures the possibility of the nation crumbling in fragments, and being laid "prostrate beneath a vast Latin empire, which would have been the curse and bane of mankind for all generations." But as this peril arose—as shown in Mr. Curteis's own notes—from the treachery of the Stuart king, who was willing to make himself the tool of Louis XIV., it is not easy to see how it is to be credited to "republican disunion," or how deliverance

[1] Green's *History of the English People*, vol. iii. p. 233.

from it is to be ascribed to the "organizing and welding instincts of the Churchman," who placed this selfish and cowardly traitor on the throne of the kingdom he would have sold to its enemies.

The Churchman has done many services to his country, for every candid Dissenter would echo the words of Mr. Curteis that "men of both parties in the Church and the State have combined to bring into being the glorious England of to-day," although he might follow this recognition by an inquiry why Dissenters should not have their full citizenship in the nation to whose glory they have so largely contributed. But it is not in his service to the Stuart cause that the Churchman has done good and enduring work. If, indeed, as the lecturer admits, the power of the "Stuart autocracy" needed to be broken, then they who did it, and so saved England from a peril far more imminent than that of subjugation to a foreign yoke, must have the honours of that period in our story. We enjoy the blessings of constitutional freedom to an extent never realized by any other nation. Discussion is free, and truth wins its way to recognition by the constant conflict of opposing parties, which at times is fierce and passionate, but which has seldom passed into illegal violence. Liberty has thus been secured by the steady and continuous advance along the same line of peaceful and legal progress. There are among us things which appear to be strange anomalies and paradoxes to those who do not understand the temper of the people or the character of our inner life. Feudalism still retains a strong hold in a country where freedom has won the most signal triumphs and is subject to the least restraint. The reason is that all our recent pro-

gress has been due to the growth of ideas which have been allowed free scope and fresh air. Our advances may therefore be gradual, but they are certain; and the assurance of the ultimate triumph of the right, which is so strong in the nation, holds it back alike from secret conspiracy and open violence. Freedom to think, freedom to teach, freedom to express opinions in the national legislature, the right of the people to govern—these are the things won for us by the defeat of the Stuart autocracy.

Mr. Green, in giving that honourable acknowledgment of the services of Puritanism which was to be expected from one who is as impartial in his judgments as he is accurate in scholarship, very properly reminds us that its real triumphs began when it laid down the sword. "It ceased from the long attempt to build up a kingdom of God by force and violence, and fell back on its truer work of building up a kingdom of righteousness in the hearts and consciences of men. It was from the moment of its seeming fall that its real victory began. The history," he adds, "of English progress since the Restoration, on its moral and spiritual sides, has been the history of Puritanism."

IV.

The consistency, however, with which Congregationalism has maintained the struggle from age to age has naturally exposed it to severe, trenchant, and contemptuous criticism. It is assailed with a bitterness shown to no other form of Dissent. The reason is sufficiently obvious. Nowhere else is the opposition to Erastian or hierarchical rule so pronounced, and nowhere else is it so formidable. When attempts have been made to concili-

ate other Dissenters who have been anxious to get credit for moderation, they have proved just as impracticable as Congregationalists could have been. But on Congregationalists the reproach attaching to aggressive Nonconformity has mainly come, and in the conflict between Church and Dissent they have generally been regarded as the representatives of Dissent. They form the main body of the anti-Church party, and are regarded with mingled aversion and dread by those who are interested in the maintenance of the State Church. Whether it is owing to the temper which ecclesiastical ascendancy engenders, or to the inability to brook any resistance to the authority of the Church, or to the inherent difficulty which dwellers in a narrow circle of their own experience have in understanding the position of others outside, certain it is that many clerical critics of Congregationalism show a strange inability to do justice to its position. They attack it on points of detail instead of grappling with its principles; they eagerly take up all adverse statements without troubling themselves to inquire on what authority they rest; they quote the heated and exaggerated assertions of deserters from its ranks as though they were the testimony of trustworthy witnesses who had been carefully cross-examined and stood the scrutiny. Congregationalists seem to be regarded as barbarians, about whom any kind of information is welcomed, and the more extravagant the stories, the more eagerly are they received.

The commonplaces about "my lord deacon," based on some expression of John Angell James, have done service in so many a controversy, that by this time they might have been supposed to be worn out, and yet we have them continually revived without any regard to their

strict accuracy or to their bearing upon the controversy. Congregationalism never has been so foolish as to suggest that all its machinery is perfect, still less that those engaged in working it are free from the common frailties of humanity. To prove that evil exists in Congregational Churches is to prove nothing; at least, until some system be discovered in which no evil has ever appeared. It does sometimes seem, however, as if no system so absolutely simple were so strangely misunderstood and so frequently misrepresented as Congregationalism. It is some satisfaction that the attacks come from opposite sides, and that the different arguments continually answer and neutralize each other. It will not, however, be uninstructive, and certainly is not unnecessary, to examine some of the views which are current at present in relation to Congregationalism.

Congregationalism, according to some, has no creed, no theology, and not necessarily any religion. It gathers men into communities and there leaves them to work their own will. The object with which this view is propounded by certain parties is too manifest to be mistaken. If it were possible to persuade the world that Congregationalism had no definite truth to teach and no Christian work to do, it is certain that there are numbers who love its freedom, to whom its form and methods are congenial, who sympathize in its protest against the interference of the State in spiritual things, and who are attached to it by innumerable associations, who would seek some other religious home rather than remain connected with a system which had no certain testimony to give relative to Christ and His salvation. The complaint about Congregationalism has, for the most part, been that its theology was too narrow

and its discipline too severe. That it has neither theology nor discipline is certainly a new theory, worthy the ingenuity of a sectarianism which is so anxious for success that it is not very scrupulous as to the means by which it is obtained. What the exact rights of separate Churches are will be considered afterwards. But what must occur to any impartial observer at the first mention of the point is that the history of Congregationalism from its outset shows it to have had a distinct Evangelical foundation. When it emerged into notice in the fierce struggles of the civil war, it was contending not for some abstract rights of man, but for the freedom of Christ's Church. "Modern readers," says Carlyle, in speaking of their contest with the Presbyterians, "ought to believe that there was a real impulse of heavenly Faith at work in this controversy; that on both sides, more especially on the Army's side, here lay the central elements of all; modifying all other elements and passions; that this controversy was in several respects very different from the common wrestling of 'Greek with Greek' for what are called political objects. Modern readers, mindful of the French Revolution, will perhaps compare these Presbyterians and Independents to the Gironde and the Mountain. And there is an analogy; with the difference, too, between Englishmen and Frenchmen, which is always considerable; and then with the difference between believers in Jesus Christ and believers in Jean Jacques, which is still more considerable." The Presbyterians of that day would not have been less astonished than the Independents had they been told that the day would come when it would be gravely asserted that Independency took note only of the rights of religious societies, not of their principles,

and that an Independent Church might be composed of Mohammedans, or unbelievers, as well as of Christians. The suggestion is so absurd that it hardly deserves serious refutation, and yet it is an argument continually employed by those who are desirous to weaken the position of Congregationalism.

The protest which Congregationalism has made against creeds has either been misunderstood or wilfully misrepresented. The imposition of creeds by any authority it has always distinctly condemned, but at no period of its history has it ever countenanced the idea that the doctrines held by a Christian man or a Christian Church are of trivial importance. Attempts to coerce conscience by binding men by rigid formulas of belief, to stereotype opinion by means of elaborate creeds, or to repress freedom of inquiry by ecclesiastical censures, are altogether out of harmony with its spirit, and at variance with its best traditions.

In this country it has not, of late years, at all events, ever got beyond a "Declaration of faith and order," by which, as the world is continually informed, no one is bound, and the wisdom even of that has come to be gravely doubted. It may, perhaps, be admitted that there has been too much sensitiveness on this point. The Declaration may be too long and too elaborate, and on that account there is the danger of confounding a number of points on which Congregationalists may be in general accord, but which few, if any of them, would regard as essential to orthodoxy, with the central truths apart from which the very idea of an Independent Church becomes an absurdity. But there is no valid reason why a number of Independent Churches should not agree to set forth the truths

which they intend to maintain. To deny their right is nothing less than an invasion of their liberty. Even were they to proceed so far as to refuse admission into their confederation to all but those who accepted their statement, they would still be acting within their competency. If they introduced into their terms of fellowship points which do not concern the vital truth of the gospel, they might be denounced as narrow, if not absolutely uncatholic. But even in that case, were they to plead that the dogma treated in so slighting a manner by others appeared to them of primary moment, that they pronounced no judgment on those who disbelieved them, though for themselves they were bent on their maintenance, and that as their association was voluntary and established for the express purpose of employing testimony, influence, and work on behalf of these particular opinions, it is not easy to see what answer could be given. To us the principle may seem extremely narrow, but there should be as much liberty for narrowness as for breadth, and, in truth, the last expedient to cure any man of narrowness is to try and force him into breadth. While, therefore, there may in the view of some be very serious objections to the formulation of any distinct statement of the principles of faith, there is none on the ground of Congregational principle, and still less on that of the practice of the fathers of Congregationalism. There are various declarations of the kind. The difference between them and authoritative creeds is this, that the latter profess to be the doctrine of the Catholic Church imposed on all its members as necessary to the enjoyment of its communion and privileges, whereas the former are simply the articles of a free and voluntary confederation among

a number of communities which do not presume to lay down a belief for others, still less define the limits of the Church of Christ, least of all to pronounce how much faith is essential to salvation, but simply to affirm that they themselves, as members of the Church of Christ, mean to set forth these doctrines as, in their judgment, part of His holy gospel.

In view of such declarations there would be more plausibility in the contention that Congregationalists, despite their protests against creeds, still have a distinct creed of their own, than in the assertion that a body which, throughout its history, has been most strenuous in asserting that a Christian Church is a spiritual body, consisting only of those who acknowledge Christ as their Saviour and Lord, and maintaining that they are under the law to Christ only, has, nevertheless, no distinct basis of religious belief at all. A wild, Quixotic, absurd enterprize is that on which they have expended so much spiritual force through the centuries, contending even to blood, if all they were struggling for was the right of independent societies to frame their own laws and manage their own discipline. If this had been all they sought, they would hardly, even in those dark days, have had to encounter the persecution they had to face. Laud himself would scarcely have desired to harry and distress a number of people who met together without any particular belief or object in order to cultivate their spiritual affinities. But these sectaries insisted that they were a Christian Church, and that their zeal against the mockery of a Church, at the head of which were prelates and priests, forced them into this association, and compelled them to utter their testimony. Nothing but religious belief could have inspired them with such

courage, or nerved them for the endurance of such sufferings. By faith Penry, and those who followed his heroic example, endured trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds, imprisonment, and death itself. In short, apart from this faith, the whole story of Congregationalism becomes an impossibility. A State may establish a hierarchy, erect cathedrals and churches, institute an elaborate machinery for bringing religious influence home to all classes of the people, frame a liturgy, and order it to be celebrated at certain times, and maintain the whole in efficient action, without any faith in Christ or in God. But that a number of communities should struggle into existence, should resist all the disintegrating influences of rank and fashion, should brave the humiliation of a petty and irritating persecution which dared not destroy, but was determined to degrade them, and should survive all, and not only escape from the political ostracism to which they were doomed, but should even multiply their numbers and extend their dominion by the simple force of their own self-sacrificing energy, and yet have no foundation of faith on which to rest, is simply incredible. What is certain is that, if Congregationalism could ever be induced to accept this view of its principles, and to strip itself of its Christian character, the system which defied the wrath of Elizabeth, and defied the cruelty of the Stuarts, would speedily perish under the enervating influences of nineteenth-century indifferentism, and with it would perish one of the most potent agencies of freedom, as well as one of the most earnest workers for Christianity that England has ever possessed.

V.

But how (say some advocates of a more organized Christianity, who would use the difficulties of this period of intellectual unrest as instruments for their own sectarian advancement) is this to be helped? On your own theory Churches are perfectly free to retain a creed or to renounce it, and if one of your independent societies resolves to do away with all doctrinal testimony, and to welcome to its fellowship all—whether Positivist, Mohammedan, or Jew—who desire a spiritual communion with all noble and unselfish souls, how can you object? They are Congregationalists even as you, for Congregationalism means the supreme right of the congregation; and though their particular society has not exercised that right in the way which you approve, that is no reason why the right should be questioned or refused to them.

So far has this interesting mode of reasoning been carried that it is gravely contended that an Independent Church, having in some way or other got possession of a particular building, has an absolute right not only to determine that it will become Presbyterian itself, but that it will transfer the building and all appertaining to it to Presbyterianism. This is extending the assumed privileges of a Congregational Church with a vengeance. Happily the point is one of which the law will take cognizance, and when religion, and common-sense, and justice fail to convince, the interposition of the law is sometimes valuable. It has no right to touch, nor does it attempt to touch, questions of theology; it cannot even inculcate the principles of a high morality, but at least it can enforce the plain obligations of honesty, and

insist upon the rightful appropriation of property. The wildest theories of Congregational liberty do not suppose the right of a congregation to dispose of property which it has done nothing to acquire. It is nothing more than a fortuitous combination of individuals who happen to assemble together in a particular building. Its constituent elements may be dependent entirely on the action of a minister, who has been a repellent influence to some although he has attracted others. Can any one seriously contend that a mere accident like this can rightfully determine the tenure of property? Or, put in other words, is it seriously maintained that the fact of a number of individuals being interested in the ministry of a particular man can give them the right to alienate the building in which they worship from the denomination to which it has always belonged, and hand it over to another for which they have a preference?

But the question still remains as to the Church. It may be forced out of a Congregational place of worship when it has distinctly renounced Congregational principles, but having acted on those principles for the last time by resolving to become Presbyterian, is not its act valid? Certainly; but in doing so it has parted with name as well as with local habitation. So might it resolve to cast aside the doctrines of the Evangelical faith, to deny the authority of Revelation, the Incarnation of the Divine Word, and the Atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to constitute a Church of all who were interested in the teaching or worship; in short, to abandon all that is distinctive in Christianity, and reduce it to a mere system of ethics and ritual; but in doing so it would cease to be a Congregational the moment that it ceased to be a Christian Church.

In either case there is no power which can forbid the use of the name. A man may traverse every doctrine which Paul taught, and then tell us — like a distinguished Presbyterian divine in a recent manifesto of that Scotch theology, which is assumed to be absolutely free from any taint of heresy—that "from Paul rabbinizing he appeals to Paul speaking out of the depths of his profound spiritual insight," and still describe himself as a Christian. But his Christianity can hardly be that of Paul, or of the vast multitudes of the Christian world who have been taught by Paul. Whether dissent from Paul is dissent from Christianity is a point not necessary to raise here. It is one proof of the marvellous power which Christ has exerted, and the extent to which the Christian idea dominates all religious thought in the most enlightened nations of the world, that the term Christian has come to be regarded as synonymous with that of a religious or good man, and men resent the idea that it should be denied simply because their opinions are divergent from those of Christendom. But there is a more limited historic sense which belongs to the word, and with all anxiety to avoid uncharitable judgments on character, it is doubtful how far it is wise to evacuate the word of all definite meaning. The Christianity which turned the world upside down, which fashioned the noble lives of apostles, and which sustained the heroic deaths of martyrs, was not a system of nebulous sentiment, very beautiful and touching, but without sure foundation or distinct principle, but a definite proclamation of a great fact, that Jesus Christ had come into the world to save sinners, that He had died, and that He had risen again according to the Scriptures. A religion without a mani-

festation of God in the flesh, without the cross and the Saviour, without the risen Christ, and without an indwelling Spirit of God, may be called Christianity, but it is not the Christianity of the New Testament, nor is it the Christianity by which in all ages men have been turned from dead works to serve the living and true God.

There is less excuse, however, for an indefinite and misleading use of the word "Congregationalism" than for this vagueness in speaking of Christianity. There is no such reflection in saying that a man or a Church is not Congregational, as might seem to be implied in the statement that it was not Christian. Of course a Church has an unquestionable right to lay down its own basis of fellowship, but, unless we are to be plunged into perpetual confusion, it is, to say the least, undesirable that it should cling to a name when it has cast aside everything which the name has been used to designate. For the idea of the supernatural in religion —in its personal aspects as well as in its world-wide revelations—has been bound up with the whole conception of Congregationalism. Its ideal Church is a body of spiritual men converted by the grace of God, and living by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is something radically different from a society of truth-seekers, resolved to live up to their light and to wait in the hope that more light will come. Both societies manage their affairs on the same plan, but no agreement in method can get rid of the essential distinction in principle. There may be political clubs, some Liberal and some Tory, which are under similar regulations, but the antagonism between the two opposing policies is not neutralized by the fact that they are alike governed by a committee which in all cases is chosen by ballot. Forms

of government are only the outward vesture, and have always been so regarded by Congregationalists. They accept the Lord's teaching that the life is more than meat and the body than raiment. They would not have waged the long conflict through which they have fought their way to their position merely for the sake of a polity, had not that polity been precious to them as the expression of a great religious principle.

VI.

It may be that there are those who are determined on establishing Congregationalism of another type. Be it so. There is no reason why the experiment should not be made; but it would be a falsification of history to identify a Congregationalism without a theology with the system which is known as a power both in the Old World and the New, and it would be an utter violation of liberty were those who still abide by the principles of the fathers to be hindered in the maintenance of their own theory of Congregationalism. For this is the point which is really at issue. The censors of Congregationalism profess to know its principles better than those by whom they are held. They have a distinct theory of their own, and Congregationalists who will not conform to it are condemned for inconsistency. With what they are inconsistent is not very clear. Not with themselves, for the views attributed to them they emphatically repudiate. Not with their fathers, for there is no point about them more manifest than their hatred for this theological laxity for which the sanction of their venerable names is sought. They are inconsistent only with a mere phantasm, which their opponents have invented, and which they have labelled

Congregationalism in order that the prejudices of good men may be awakened against a system whose creedless liberty has become a source of such serious peril in an age like this.

There could be few things less desirable than a discussion among Christian Churches as to the comparative extent to which they have been affected by the unbelief of the day, and certainly nothing more unworthy than for one to try and obtain an advantage over a rival by whispering suspicions of its loyalty to Christ. If, indeed, it could be shown that there was one Church system which alone encouraged the advances of scepticism and error, and that while all others were able to present a firm front of resistance to the attacks of a common foe, there was in its defences some weak point through which the forces of unbelief were able to enter, that would be a serious allegation not lightly to be dismissed. But where is the Church which has not felt the disturbing influences of speculative doubt? Congregationalism is freer in character, spirit, and method than any other Church system. Its ministers throw themselves, perhaps, more thoroughly than others into the currents of thought and feeling of the day, taking an active part in all intellectual, social, and political movements, and, to their honour be it said, cultivating a wider range of reading than the clergy of any Church. They cannot boast of the high and accurate scholarship of men trained in the universities, and enjoying opportunities of study that are not open to others, but in the literature of the times they would not fear to enter into competition even with the clergy. They know less of classical antiquity, less of patristic theology, less of the requirements and elegances of scholarship generally; but

with the philosophic thought of the day they are as familiar as any class of men. This might be supposed to be a source of danger, and it might be suggested that, if the Church of England was most exposed to the seductions of Romanism, Congregationalism, on the other side, lay more open to the incursions of Rationalism. The absence of distinct creeds and formularies, and the looser character of their organization generally, might be supposed to increase the danger. It has long been a favourite suggestion with the enemies of Congregationalism that it fostered a spirit subversive of faith in the gospel.

A grievous charge indeed, were it true, or were there such a show of evidence in its favour as to give it even the semblance of truth. But it is utterly unsustained by facts. Congregationalism, indeed, has never furnished a soil congenial to the growth of pietism, and those who identify pietistic conceptions and millenarian theology with the Evangelical creed deny its orthodoxy. In its own way, it is as English as the Anglican Church. The spasmodic and sensational style of religious thought is not in harmony with the genius of the system. It is ready to welcome new ideas, and to look at the old faith in the light which they throw upon it. Especially is it careful to discriminate between the primary doctrines of the gospel and those subsidiary ones which fringe round the central truth, but are not of the essence of Christianity. It expects variety, it encourages liberty, it tolerates wide differences of opinions, but it holds fast by the simplicity that is in Christ.

Nowhere is there more independence than among its ministers, yet nowhere is there more general agreement.

It is not necessary to inquire into the reason of a harmony which must appear a surprising phenomenon to those who believe that without some formal subscription to a fixed standard of belief such unity is impossible. There is the fact, whatever may be the explanation. That there are exceptions to the rule it is not sought to deny. Pessimists, who are found in every age and every community, and are always ready with their lamentations over the degeneracy of the times, or theologians who hold to a hard and fast line, and fancy that all who do not abide by it are abandoning the faith, may say that the exceptions are numerous, but the opinion is not one that will be endorsed by those who are familiar with the inner life of Congregational Churches, and who have sufficient wisdom and largeness of heart to understand the unity of faith which exists under great varieties of expression. Were it otherwise, it would be nothing short of a disaster, over which true friends of the gospel and liberty alike would mourn. It would mean the failure of Congregationalism and its approaching fall, and its fall would be the sweeping away of a system which, more than any other, has been able to combine spiritual freedom with earnest fidelity to the gospel. If the attempt to unite these two should prove to be a mistake, and if the only result should be a drift into Rationalism, the cause not only of intellectual but of political liberty also would lose one of its mightiest supports. Happily, the experience of centuries tells a very different tale. The liberties of England owe more to men who have based their contention for political right upon Christian principle than to any other class. Were these religious convictions to be weakened, there must be a consequent diminution of the force which has

hitherto been consistently and strenuously employed on behalf of true progress. It is conceivable that some who at heart dread freedom, though they may be occasionally found fighting in the ranks of its supporters, because they have some grievance of their own for which they seek redress, should contemplate an issue of this kind without regret. Congregationalism is distasteful to all who have any reactionary leanings or cravings after the support of authority. It will not wear the strait waistcoats, which such men regard as the only safeguards from theological aberration, and they are disposed to exult in the difficulties which grow out of its freedom. Their criticisms are in harmony with all their principles, and were to be anticipated. But for the champions of what is called advanced thought to adopt a similar policy, and try to force Congregationalists into the admission that they must either renounce all claims to liberalism, or abandon all attempts to maintain a definite leading of Christianity, is nothing less than infatuation. Were the choice as they would fain put it, there can be no question that the liberalism would perish and the faith in the gospel would remain. The device is a favourite one among all supporters of authority, but for Liberals to adopt it is suicide.

Ultramontanes would fain persuade the world that they and the Agnostics are the only people in the world, and there are Agnostics at the other extreme who are ready enough to accept the teaching. The kind of attack to which Congregationalism has recently been exposed from both sides is only another illustration of the same spirit. One party insists that a Church must have some fixed and authoritative standard of belief or it will be as a city broken down without walls.

On the opposite side it is contended that a Church with professions so liberal as those of Congregationalism must allow of an indefinite latitude, which will admit of every shade of opinion in its churches or pulpits, or its liberty is a mockery and a delusion. In both cases there is but the feeble echo of the case continually urged with much more force by the Romish Church. One of its champions in Cardinal Newman's story of *Loss and Gain*, puts it thus: "'I have ever been a Catholic,' said Mr. Morley; 'so far I cannot judge of members of the Church of England; but this I know, the Catholic Church is the only true Church. I may be wrong in many things; I cannot be wrong in this. This too I know, that the Catholic has faith, and that no other Church has faith. The Church of England has no faith.'" So would its advocates deal with Presbyterian Confessions as with Anglican Articles, simply applying to them the self-same principles which they are both so ready to apply to Congregationalism. An evil thing would it be for Protestantism if it once admitted that truth did require thus to intrench itself behind some buttress of human device and construction, and an equal disaster if it were regarded as essential to liberty that a Church should be forbidden to define the character of its own teaching, or a number of Churches to mark out the limits of their own fellowship.

VII.

But this being so, where, it is asked, is the superior freedom enjoyed in Congregational Churches? The need for expansion is one of the recognized wants of the day, and if Congregationalism could supply it, it would

prove itself fitted, in one important respect at least, to be the Church of the future. Men cannot longer be cramped by precedents, their thought forced into the mould of stereotyped dogmas, their inquiries narrowed and restricted by the bondage which Churches would impose. The system that gives them the widest liberty is that which will command the homage of thinkers. With the liberal professions of Congregationalism, it might have been hoped it would meet this demand. But on the showing of its own defenders it does not. With all the apparent restrictions, of which so much is made, the Church of England is practically more free, and in it are men of unquestionable piety, to whom Congregationalism could not offer a home. An obvious and complete answer to this would be that there is not a Congregational Church in the kingdom which would refuse admission, on doctrinal grounds, to any Anglican clergyman who honestly fulfils the terms of his own subscription, and still further, that there are numbers of good men in its communion and in its ministry on whose orthodoxy not a suspicion rests, who would hesitate about giving even such modified assent to the Thirty-nine Articles and the Liturgy as is still demanded from its clergy. If there be some tacit understanding by which the obligations of subscription are supposed to be relaxed, that is a point which cannot fairly be taken into account, since the extent to which advantage can be taken of this assumed liberty must depend on the conscience of the individual.

Congregationalists, indeed, would hardly refuse to recognize a man who would adopt even the simplest of the three creeds which the Church of England requires its clergy not only to accept but publicly to recite. It is true

this was not so once. Congregationalism has felt—no system more or so much—the liberalizing influence of scientific and philosophic thought; and even those of its members who themselves adhere to a more rigid system of theology are not disposed to make it in any sense a test of fellowship, even to such an extent as their fathers might have done a quarter of a century ago. Where each Church is free, there may be, and probably are, individual Churches which hold fast by the more exclusive policy of former times, but the spirit of the Congregationalism of to-day is opposed to restrictions which would bar the entrance to its churches against any who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and worship Him as their Saviour and their God.

The Congregational conception of liberty is that in a Christian Church there should be liberty for all who honour Christ, but not for those who deny Him or who doubt His authority. It does not trouble itself to find a home for those who have religious sentiments but no religious convictions, whose very ideas of God are wrapped in haze, and who, though they do not enrol themselves among the worshippers of humanity, have little, if anything, to distinguish them from the votaries of that cult. Men whose whole creed is summed up in a few vague generalities, and who, even on all the fundamental truths of religion, have not got beyond the stage of Agnosticism; who have a general admiration of all systems, but have some special objection to each one in particular; who accept what they regard as the spiritual essence of Christianity, but do not believe in the Divine Christ, are certainly not entitled to complain of Christian Churches that they do not provide them with a home nor offer them a platform from which to scatter their

doubts as to the gospel itself. That would be a wild Radicalism indeed which should contend, not only that treason should be allowed freedom of speech and action within the realm, and even in the chambers of the Legislature, but that the Government should provide it with the means by which its disloyal crusade might be carried on. Yet this is the demand which is put forth in relation to the kingdom of Christ, and Congregationalism is accused of some breach of liberty because it does not make the concession. That reproach it must be content to bear. If there are systems which grant this license to disloyalty, and while they call themselves Churches of Christ, allow their pulpits to be converted into positions from which attack is directed against Christ and Christianity, they have no desire to be classed in the number. For liberty of opinion and of speech they have always contended, but the idea that a man's liberty is narrowed unless he is allowed to employ forces which he has done nothing to create, and to the exercise of which he has no inherent right, for the purpose of baffling the very objects for which they were called into being, is a caricature of every true conception of freedom. How far such opinions ought to be included in a Church which claims to be national it is not for them to determine, for the simple reason that they do not seek to be a national Church, nor do they believe that a nation can establish a Church without being guilty of gross injustice. It certainly would appear as if, in order to be truly comprehensive, a State Church ought to admit even this anomalous element; but surely no stronger argument against the existence of such an institution could possibly be found. The point is one, however, which may well be left to the defenders of national Churches to deal with as

best they can. Congregationalism is a purely voluntary system, and its advocates certainly are strictly within their rights when they determine the particular character it shall assume. There is no question of liberty involved, except the liberty which every society has a right to claim of deciding its own principles. It is they who endeavour to interfere with the exercise of that right who are intolerant; and the tyranny is not less real because it is attempted in the name of liberty, and professedly with the view of extending its privileges.

VIII.

There is, however, another and more serious objection frequently started as to the action of Congregationalists in this matter of liberty. The theory, it is said, may be true and wide enough, but what about the practice? Churches, or rather, perhaps, deacons assuming to act in their name, practically dictate the creed of the ministry and the teachings of the pulpit. Narrow-minded, uncultured men, dominated by old prejudices, and foolishly jealous even of the faintest departures in expression from the teachings of past generations, impose the law both upon congregations and ministers. It is curious that if this be so Congregationalists should be, as the attacks continually made upon them by the self-appointed conservators of orthodoxy admit, the most progressive of all our religious communities. The assailants should preserve a show of consistency in their criticism. Congregational Churches cannot at one and the same time be kept in a state of bondage by the repressive action of antiquated deacons, and hurried into the wildest eccentricities of error by the headstrong rashness of

free-thinking ministers. The truth is, they are partly open to either of these charges. Like every other great community, they have "their centre and their extremes," and here and there one extreme or the other may obtain the mastery and bring discredit on the system whose principles it misrepresents. It is one of the dangers to which free systems, whether in Church or State, are subjected; but it would be as outrageous to judge of Congregationalists by these extravagances on either side as to pronounce on the merits of the British constitution by a reference to the action of the Home Rulers in the House of Commons, or the reckless procedure of irresponsible majorities in the Upper Chamber. Everywhere it is the centre that determines the character of a great body, and in Congregationalism the centre is especially numerous and strong, and the extremes singularly weak. The cases are rare indeed in which a minister conscientiously discharging his duty has any need to fear the action of deacons or influential members. Whenever such action is taken it is bruited about everywhere, but no one cares to notice or talk about the far more numerous cases in which tolerance goes almost to a fault. But assuredly, as a general rule, it may be confidently asserted that there is no minister under any system who can enjoy a more independent position than that of a Congregational minister, provided he remembers that he is a minister of Christ, and not a priest, is faithful to the trust he has accepted, exercises an ordinary amount of common sense, thinks more of the success of his work and the glory of his Master than of personal dignity, authority, or interest. These are doubtless considerable qualifications, but surely not too considerable to be expected from a minister of Jesus Christ. If,

indeed, the ministry of the gospel be regarded merely as a profession, and a man's view of it be regulated accordingly, it is easy to understand how easily he may come into collision with the Church about some miserable personal claim. Or if, tinged with priestly ideas, he expects the sort of deference, or claims the spiritual authority to which the priesthood pretend, differences are sure to arise. But the minister who is satisfied to lead, and does not seek to dictate or coerce, who speaks not as an infallible teacher but as one who has himself to be tested by the Divine word, whose rule is too gentle and constraining to provoke resentment, and whose unselfish devotion to his work lifts up the whole of his service, need not fear that he will have to meet a fretting resistance and petty tyranny, instead of the generous appreciation which such work—work of the noblest kind that man can do—ought always to command.

IX.

The idea that deacons rule Congregational Churches and their ministers is so widespread and so deeply rooted that it is not easy to get rid of it. Almost every deserter from the ranks of the Congregational ministry has some new story to tell of the tyranny of deacons, and while he confidently asks for sympathy under the oppressions he has had to suffer, forgets how largely his complaints are a condemnation of himself. Possibly after the experience of a few years within that Establishment which, in the gushing emotion and innocent simplicity of his first love, he regards as the haven of perfect rest, he may have a tale of a somewhat similar kind to tell of those with whom he has been

brought into close relations in his new church. There are those who work more easily and happily when they have not so much of the responsibility of lead and direction as devolves upon the minister of a Congregational Church, and they are not to be censured if they join another community, with whose teachings they agree, and whose general arrangements are more in harmony with their own temperament and taste. But in the case of another class there is a perpetual difficulty in association with others, unless they are allowed to exercise autocratic rule. Undoubtedly that is contrary to the genius of Congregationalism, and is not easy to obtain in its Churches; but it is not desirable that it should exist anywhere. Deacons, as representatives of the Church, brought into close and constant communication with the pastors on all questions of Church management, have necessarily to bear the brunt of the opposition to any strivings after personal rule, and the odium rests on them accordingly. It is thus that they have often been brought into such disrepute, and that such exaggerated conceptions are abroad as to the power they possess and the extent to which it is abused.

The deacons of Congregational Churches, taken as a body, are not only worthy of high respect, but deserve the gratitude of the Churches for the service which they do, and which is too often requited with ungenerous criticism. But at the same time it may be admitted that there is no point in the economy of Congregationalism which ought to receive more careful consideration, and in which in the estimation of many there is need for more drastic reform, than the arrangements relative to the diaconate. Those who hold that the deacons in Congregational Churches of to-day corre-

spond exactly to the deacons of Apostolic times, and who believe further that in the New Testament we have a complete model of Church government to which we are bound to conform in every particular, will, of course, maintain that change is inadmissible. But unless they have already undertaken a careful examination of the subject they will probably be surprised to find how very difficult it will be to maintain either of these propositions. On Church government, as on other subjects, the New Testament lays down principles, not minute directions, and its teaching is by example rather than by positive law. The spirituality of the Church, the supreme headship of Christ within it, its self-governing power under Him, are principles not to be transgressed. The presidency of presbyters or bishops seems to have been an invariable practice, and has the authority which such a precedent can give. But there is, to say the least, room for the suggestion that the "deacons" did not necessarily constitute a separate office with clearly defined and uniform duties, but that under that general term were included all to whom were committed any special service apart from that exercised by the ministry. That there were in the early Churches a number of men chosen for life, exercising a general supervision alike over the bishops and the Church at large, having the entire direction of all secular business, and interfering largely in the spiritual as well, especially for the regulation of doctrine, is a position that is certainly not tenable. That is not decisive as to the expediency of such an institution in our own day. A Church constituted on apostolic principles is not hide-bound by tradition and precedents, but, like any other society, must exercise its own judgment as to the adaptation of its methods—

which is a very different thing from the accommodation of its principles—to the changing needs of society. All that is argued from the fact is that apostolic precedent is not to be quoted in favour of a state of things into which some Congregational Churches have drifted, and in which there is an element of peril, though quite as much to the rights of the Church as to the influence of the minister.

The Church must have an executive, and if it be fairly chosen and so frequently renewed as to enjoy the confidence of the Church, which is necessarily a changing body, ever receiving large accessions of new life, then the fuller the confidence that is reposed in the diaconate the better. It is not essential to the maintenance of the rights of the Church that it should be continually asserting its control over every detail of expenditure or administration. Where new enterprizes are to be undertaken, or important changes are contemplated, or opinion on questions of doctrine or polity is to be expressed, or the admission or exclusion of members from fellowship to be determined, or a pastor to be elected, the Church must be consulted. But in subordinate matters its executive should be left free to act. But if this power is to be in the hands of an executive, and to be used with any satisfaction to the Church, it must have the trust of the community, and this is not likely to be enjoyed unless it be the choice of the Church as it is, and not as it was five, or ten, or twenty years ago. A more frequent election of deacons, which is now so common, is an important step in the way of reform, and one which seems to be absolutely essential in Churches where, owing to the local circumstances, changes in the membership are so

rapid that a Church of to-day may possibly have few of the elements of which it was composed ten or even seven years ago.

But this is not all that is requisite in order to get rid of the evil arising out of an exaggerated idea of the diaconal office. Granted that the cases are rare in which the resulting mischief assumes any serious proportions, that Diotrephes has but few modern imitators, and that these seldom, if ever, find their way into the diaconate, still all admit that there are exceptions, and these exceptions afford occasion for reproach and offence which it is desirable to escape. If the idea of an "order" could be once and for ever exorcised, and if deacons could feel and act as though they were nothing more than an executive of the Church, consulting with the pastor and helping him in the prosecution of his work, there would be less room for the cheap and easy but very unsatisfactory criticism of the Congregational system which is so common.

But whatever reform be adopted, it will still be true that the relations between pastors and deacons must always be of such a character as to require delicate and kindly handling; in other words, to need the exercise of Christian temper and the cultivation of Christian wisdom on both sides. The pastor is possibly young and inexperienced, but full of youthful enthusiasm, and, as we all have been in our day, intent on innovations which appear to him great reforms; whereas the deacons belong to another generation, have been taught by frequent experiment to distrust new ideas and plans, have perhaps some of that calculating prudence which is learned in the walks of business, but which to a fervid youth appears cold, if not absolutely cynical, in its tone.

The happy amalgamation of these two elements would be an immense gain both in wisdom and strength to the Church, and it can be effected by the influence of that Christian temper which the Church has a right to expect from both. Unquestionably the position of the pastor who has to lead, and who must give the determining tone to the association, is a difficult one. So is it with all leadership. It is not to be denied that Congregationalism does demand the exercise of high Christian qualities in order to its healthful action, and in this respect it is like all free systems of government. Chiefs and people everywhere are called to the cultivation of nobler virtue, as they have higher privilege and responsibility, under a state of perfect liberty than under one of restraint; and, unfortunately, we have continual proofs that it is equally difficult to secure them in political and in ecclesiastical life. But freedom is not to be sacrificed because its institutions can only be successfully worked where there is a lofty patriotism, for the sake of which all selfish and party considerations are subordinated, and, combined with it, a mutual forbearance which understands that an exaggeration of the claims and an abuse of the forms of liberty becomes a tyranny which of all tyrannies is the most obnoxious and detestable.

So in Church life Congregationalism does impose on all who would enjoy its privileges the exercise of patience, consideration, and respect for the feelings and rights of others; to sum up in a word, of Christian charity. They are not worthy of its freedom who are unable to accept its conditions. If any mistake freedom for an unlimited power of self-assertion, fancy that pastor and people alike may be a law unto themselves, disregard the general welfare of the Church, and care only for the success

of schemes of their own, Congregationalism is not responsible for these excesses of lawless and selfish individualism. It has no such custom any more than other Churches of Christ. Admit that it lays a heavier burden of responsibility both on minister and Church—with it is associated a higher meed of honour. How the two things are to be separated is not apparent. To be a successful leader and guide of men, and especially in matters relating to the spiritual and eternal life, is no light distinction, but it comes not to selfish ambition, to overweening self-confidence, to imperious and arbitrary wills. It needs patience, endurance, ready tact, kindly sympathy, and, above all, consecration to the cause for which leader and followers alike exist. A man cannot at once climb into this position, and if before he has earned confidence by true service he hastily grasps at authority, he is sure to create difficulty, and in all probability to lose the prize. But let him prove himself capable to guide by inspiring the conviction that what he seeks is not his own glory but the honour of his Master, and the cases are rare indeed in which a Church will allow a faithful minister to be worried or fretted, much less to be hindered, in his work by the tyrannies of individual caprice or the bigotry of antiquated prejudice.

X.

The difficulty undoubtedly is to secure a sufficient supply of workers of this kind. It is this, and not any defect in organization, which hinders the aggressive action of Congregationalism. It is easy to multiply priests, it is impossible to manufacture preachers and pastors to order. The work of Congregationalism is,

therefore, prosecuted under conditions which it is never easy to fulfil, and which become specially difficult in an age when the speculations of philosophy have affected so many young men of culture that, if they have not forsaken the faith of the gospel themselves, they are unwilling to accept the office of its teachers. In this point some other systems have an advantage. Either they rely less upon preaching and more upon ritual, or they have a more absolute control of the ministerial force at their disposal, and can better distribute it for the work of extension. But Congregationalists feel that they would purchase such advantages too dearly were they to alter the mode of their work or to interfere with the free action of ministers and Churches.

It is certain, however, that Congregationalism must be more aggressive if it is to maintain its true position. Its real growth is not, indeed, to be measured by figures and statistics. Considering how much of general service it undertakes, in which other sections of the Church bear but little part, the progress it has made during the last half-century is very remarkable. In the building of chapels, in the improvement of its collegiate system, in the multiplication of churches and the strengthening of their evangelistic agencies, its progress is evidence of remarkable vitality and zeal. But these outward and visible manifestations are not the only or even the best evidences of its power. The influence of its teaching has been so widely felt that there is hardly a Church into which its ideas have not penetrated, and where they do not exert more or less power. The Bampton lecturer of 1871 makes an extraordinary use of the leavening influence which Congregationalism has exerted upon his own Church when he uses it as a reason

why Congregationalism should abandon its own distinctive position. There is, in the judgment of Canon Curteis, no necessity for Congregationalism now, since the Church of England has accepted its most characteristic features: "I would point out to Churchmen at least, and, if I might be permitted to do so, to Congregationalists also, that the very truths which they have most conspicuously emblazoned on their banner are simply an essential part of the acknowledged teaching of the Church of England. 'The ecclesiastical rights of the laity,' and the urgent 'need of guarding Christendom against secular corruptions from without'—where are these two maxims more clearly enunciated, or more energetically acted on at the present day, than within the National Church? No one can honestly doubt that this fact is in some measure owing to Congregationalist influence. But at the same time it is equally certain that, while these small private religious bodies, holding such fragments of the truth as their own specialities, and carrying them apart as 'banners,' magnify them out of all due and healthful proportion, the Church (on the other hand), holds them with a far broader and more statesmanlike freedom. For she balances them carefully by many other compensating truths, and so keeps them in due subordination to the true 'analogy of the faith.'"

It is possible to accept an acknowledgment so honourably made and yet to discard the advice which is scarcely consistent with its admissions. Congregationalists who have taught the Established Church these great truths would show neither good judgment nor consistent loyalty to the truths themselves were they, having hitherto been the teachers, henceforth to

commit the care of them to disciples who in accepting them think it necessary to introduce such qualifications as those which the learned and courteous Canon here supplies. They have not secured for these principles their present force by that nice system of balancing and adjustments on which he lays so much stress. And they are not so assured of their position amongst those who have hitherto resisted them as to be inclined to have recourse to these compromises and compensations now.

Congregationalism, however, may congratulate itself on admissions from such quarters of the service which it has done to the country. The Church of England is not the only Church into which its ideas and principles have been distilled. It is both interesting and curious to note the evidences of a Congregational temper even in Churches whose organization is of the highest type. It is not very necessary to-day to insist upon the rights of the laity, since there are few communities indeed in which the laity do not seem perfectly disposed to insist upon their own rights. The danger, indeed, seems rather to be in some quarters lest Congregational principles should be so abused as to be invoked in support of liberty which is inconsistent with the discharge of obligations that have been voluntarily contracted, or which defies the authority of law even in an institution which law has created, and which law, therefore, is entitled to govern. But in other directions it is certainly satisfactory to find that the legitimate rights and wishes of the private members of the Church receive now recognition which was once denied them. It is not too much to say that the Congregational system has not grown as it otherwise would have done, because the Congregational ideas have been allowed so largely

to temper the administration of other communities, by whom the name and principles of Congregationalism are repudiated, and, when occasion presents itself, are even now made the theme of an unworthy sneer.

Still, Congregationalism cannot be content merely with successes like these. It has its work to do in planting free and independent Churches, and that work must be done with an energy, a heartiness, a fervid zeal and a whole-hearted consecration, a resolution such as shall cause the efforts of coming years to surpass any that have marked a former period of its history.

To say that it cannot organize its forces without the violation of its principles is only to betray an utter misconception of those principles themselves. Its Churches have perfect liberty of action to work alone or in combination, as they may think most expedient. Their principles do not compel the establishment of a Church, vested with full power of self-government, as soon as a few converts have been gathered in a particular district. On the contrary, they allow all possible freedom and elasticity of action consistent with the maintenance of the free life and independence of the Churches themselves. An organization to govern violates the first principle of Independency ; an organization for work is no more than the consistent application of those principles for the highest end which Churches can ever contemplate. There can be no power to force, even into a missionary organization, Churches which are so afraid of the creation even of a tone of opinion that might be unfriendly to their self-government, that they are unwilling to compromise themselves by any united action, except it be on the smallest scale. But, on the other hand, Congregationalism interposes no difficulty in the way of those whose

belief is that unity is strength ; that the isolated efforts of separate Churches must necessarily be to a large extent wasteful, if not unproductive ; and that the only mode of overtaking the necessities of the population and of giving Congregationalism its true status in the Christian work of the times is by the concentration of the forces of all its Churches. There must be a melancholy lack of everything like statesmanlike quality if it is not possible to secure this union of effort without tampering in the slightest degree with the independency which the Churches are bound to guard, and which, to do them justice, they have not yet shown the slightest disposition to surrender or even to abate.

The elasticity of Congregationalism is its glory. Churches can act singly or unitedly, as the Association of a town, of a country, or of the nation, and still retain their fidelity to their cherished principles. The answer to those who say that Congregationalism cannot be missionary and aggressive is in an appeal to fact. It is aggressive. It is possessed to-day by the missionary spirit. The one longing of its ministers and members is to give that spirit freer play and fuller manifestation. Whether it has been sufficiently wise in using that elasticity which is its characteristic, may be open to question. It is not necessary that a Church should consist merely of the members meeting in one building. It may consist of a number of Christians meeting in different buildings, but uniting in one fellowship, and presided over by one or more pastors. Still less is it necessary that every village community should be constituted into a separate Church with a minister absolutely set apart to the work, and needing, therefore, to derive his entire support either from the Church itself or from

some outside association. It is perfectly compatible with all its principles to group churches together, or to have a central church with a number of mission stations forming part of an organic whole. There is no reason why a minister of a village church, too small either to occupy his whole time, or still less to provide him with a necessary competence, should not unite the duties of a secular calling with those of the ministry; and it is not at all certain that in many cases where the congregations consist mainly of members in the humbler walks of life, that this union, by giving more of a practical work-day tone to the discourses of the pastor, would not be an advantage rather than an injury. Above all, there is no reason why Congregationalism should not use, to a much larger extent than it has ever done, the preaching power that may be found among the private members of the Church. It knows no professional distinction between clergy and laity. It puts no bar of order or of office upon the door of its pulpit. If there has been any hesitation in the employment of lay agency, it is owing not to any doubt as to the legality of the method, but simply to the practical difficulties in the way of its employment. If it is to do its work in the future it must be by a strong, manly resolution, which shall sweep away all obstacles, and so develope in full strength a force which hitherto has been but imperfectly cultivated.

Neither the nation nor the Church of Christ can do without Congregationalism. It does not profess to be the sole system on which a Christian community can be established, but even on the confession of its most honourable opponents it is that which approaches most nearly to the apostolic model. It is perfectly true that

many of the principles for which it once contended—as has already been seen—have received more or less distinct recognition in other communities; but they need still to have the testimony and service of the Churches in which those principles have always been embodied, and in which they are not associated with other ideas that more or less neutralize their force. There is as much need as ever of the protest both against priestcraft and the tyranny of the State in spiritual affairs; and Congregationalism will never cease from its special work in the political field until it has secured the acknowledgment of the legislature to the principle which lies at the root of disestablishment—that conscience owns no ruler but God, and religion needs no support but that which it derives from the faith and love of those who are its willing subjects, and that the Church of Christ forgets its dignity and compromises its purity when, for the sake of any material advantage, it bows its head to the yoke of secular power, and acknowledges any ruler but the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Supreme Head and Governor of His Church.

Mr. Hatch, the Bampton lecturer of last year, has discussed the subject of the "Organization of the Early Christian Churches" with a rare candour, only equalled by the ability with which it is associated. Congregationalists have special reason to be grateful to him for the testimony he bears as to the constitution of the early Christian communities. He contends, indeed, that "nothing will be really gained by showing that this or that element of Church government is more primitive than another: nothing will be really lost by the admission that this or that element in the great aggregate of historical developments is later than another." But the

value of the statements which he makes, as the result of careful inquiry and independent thought, is not affected by our judgment of the principles he seeks to establish. It is perfectly true that "the preservation of ancient form is impossible," and if the question of Church government was one simply of forms and details, an appeal to primitive example, even though it were apostolic, would be eminently unsatisfactory. But there is a spirit in institutions so independent of mere form that the spirit of one system may sometimes clothe itself in the vesture of another. We have seen an imperialism masking in democratic garb, but the spirit remains unaltered, despite the employment of alien forms. What Congregationalists would maintain is, not that every form of apostolic method can or ought to be perpetuated in the Church, but that the spirit of the apostolic institution was intended to be preserved in the Churches of all ages.

What that spirit was, Mr. Hatch clearly shows. "In the first ages of its history, while, on the one hand, it was a great and living faith, so, on the other hand, it was a vast and organized brotherhood. And, being a brotherhood, it was a democracy: the 'multitude which no man could number' stood before the throne of God, bound together in an equal union by the tie of a common sonship, a common kinship, and a common priesthood." As it was in the days of early simplicity and purity, so Mr. Hatch anticipates it will be in the coming times of ultimate triumph. "It would seem as though, in that vast secular revolution which is accomplishing itself, all organization, whether ecclesiastical or civil, must be, as the early Churches were, more or less democratical."[1] Congregationalists may reasonably be satisfied with such

[1] Hatch's *Bampton Lectures*, 1880, pp. 213, 215.

acknowledgments as these. They carry much more even than appears at first. Though there is no distinct assertion that while Christianity was a "great and living faith," the Church was a "vast and organized brotherhood," that is certainly the thought which is suggested, and it is one which history goes far to justify. There have been heroic periods in the story of the Church—the days of its early struggle and victory, the times of reformation, the seasons of spiritual revival—when men have been willing to consider all things but loss for the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and have not even counted their own lives dear for His sake. Whenever there has been this awakening of primitive faith and zeal, there has been also a disposition to revive the primitive democracy. The character and work of the humble confessors of Christ have always been depreciated by hierarchs and their champions, because of the instinctive feeling that they were witnesses against their own idolatry of the Church. They were the revolutionists of the Church, and wherever the spirit of faith was revived there this democratic sentiment, inspiring protests against the usurpations of priests and popes and kings, was sure speedily to reveal itself. God forbid that we should ever be insensible to the piety and zeal which have distinguished individuals whose sympathies were all on the opposite side. Our contention only is that looking at communities or periods, the two elements are always found in association, and that a living Church is instinct with the spirit of freedom and brotherhood.

It is possible to assent to all that Mr. Hatch says as to the influences which led to the changes in the constitution of the Church, gradually transforming the simple democracy of primitive times into the imposing and

despotic hierarchy, without admitting that those changes were in the natural and proper order of spiritual development. The connection between the break-up of the Western Empire and the growing ascendancy of Rome may be easily traced as a point of history, but that does not affect our judgment upon the change. It came because the Church had gradually lost its original purity; because faith had become weak, and men who had lost the sense of the presence of Christ in His Church had learned to trust in forms; because devoutness had degenerated into superstition, and reason had prostrated itself at the foot of authority; because the priest had placed himself on the throne of God, and exalted himself above all that is known by the name of God. The effects of that corruption of the gospel have not even yet been wholly removed. Perhaps they are so much the result of evils which have their roots deep in human nature that traces of them will always be found there. But we who have always maintained that the democratic idea of the Church is primitive and scriptural, may well rejoice in the confession of one of high authority, himself not in sympathy with our principles, that as the Church adapts itself more to the wants of our complex modern civilization, it will return to the apostolic idea. The experiments of man have been tried and have proved failures. Human forces which were intended to crush opposition and compel belief have been broken. Once more the Church will trust to the energy of a living faith, and a free Christian brotherhood will renew those great spiritual triumphs of early days. It is not to be expected that brotherhood will organize itself everywhere precisely in the same way. Variety is ever attendant on liberty, and it will be seen

in the development of free Christian communities. But this, at least, may confidently be predicted, that the Church which is to conquer the world must be the Church of the people, not of the priest.

Thus has the survey of the religious systems of our time and our country been completed. It was not undertaken with any view of insisting upon the exclusive claims of any one Church, but was intended as an attempt to revive the memories of the facts which are least known—the facts of our recent Church history—and to estimate the effects which they have produced upon the spiritual and ecclesiastical life of the country, to describe the several forces which are at work in all Christian communities, and to calculate their probable influence. There has been an earnest desire to preserve through the whole a spirit of charity; and if in any points it should ever seem to have been wanting, the lack is due to the infirmity of the flesh, not to the presence of bigoted antagonism to any Church. Every man who is conscientiously attached to his own Church must be too keenly sensitive as to the misrepresentations which are often given of it, and too conscious of the embittering and exasperating influence which these are calculated to exert, to allow himself willingly to fall into similar fault on his own side. Nevertheless it is certain that, owing partly to the difficulty we all have in realizing the exact position of others, and partly to the want of intercourse amongst the members of rival Churches in this country, we do, even with the best intentions, often fail to apprehend the principles and action of our opponents. It may probably have been so in the case of these lectures. One thing at least the lecturer can say—that his desire

has been to do justice, and that, above all, he has ever been anxious to honour true godliness and Christian work in whatever community it may be found, and in it to recognize the presence and work of the Divine Spirit.

The bigotry which is at once narrow and aggressive, blind to all good outside its own system, and bent therefore on extending its own Church at the cost of others, is as shortsighted as it is unchristian. A man is properly anxious for the success of his own system, but that success will never be achieved by attempts to depreciate the power of other Churches. Anything more melancholy, more humiliating, more shortsighted, than a proselytizing warfare of this kind it is not easy to conceive. Even in speaking of the treatment of tares—*i.e.*, of errors, corruptions, and even sins—the Lord said, "Let both" (that is, good and evil) "grow together until the harvest." Surely when the differences between Christian men are mainly upon some small matters of Church polity, a maxim like this may well apply, and all may be content to engage simply in strengthening the life of their own principles, without invidious endeavours to misrepresent the principles and so to check the progress of others. "Let all grow together"—Calvinist and Arminian, Methodist and Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Episcopalian—until the Great Day come, and meanwhile let our one struggle be a generous rivalry in the conversion and education of human souls. That Church will have the fairest record, as even now it is coming to command the mightiest power, which can develope the most robust and earnest form of practical godliness; which can best meet the forces of error and evil on their own field, and vanquish them in the name of God; which can do most for the recovery of

humanity from the power of the god of this world, and for its subjection to the law of Christian liberty and love.

There are great fundamental truths about some of which there may exist differences amongst those who nevertheless can respect each other for Christian sincerity and conscientiousness. About these controversy will be inevitable, and all that can be done is to take care that such controversy is conducted in fairness and with charity. But for the free Protestant Churches of England to forget the solemn responsibilities that rest upon them in connection with the great struggle against priestcraft and against unbelief, and to indulge in petty wrangles about the smaller matters of the law, eagerly seeking out each other's defects and magnifying them to the delight of a scoffing world and an ever-encroaching sacerdotalism, is a sight over which angels might weep. The world is weary and the Church is sick of mere sectarian polemics, and in truth both are only too impatient of the calm discussion of great principles. Assuredly not by this wrath of man, this clash and clatter of angry voices, this waving of banners and rattle of musketry, this struggle for sectarian ascendancy with all its painful incidents, will the righteousness of God ever be wrought. What we should seek for with all singleness of aim and earnestness of effort is a vital Christian union, not by means of outward confederation, nor on the basis of doctrinal or ecclesiastical formularies, but by a wise co-operation of all Christian communities acting together, in obedience to the one principle of love to Christ, yet each working according to its own distinctive methods to win this great nation to God. It is a reproach to all our Churches that in this

nineteenth century, with all the light and knowledge which England enjoys, with Christian influences in every hamlet and village, with the Word of God in almost every cottage in the land, there should be such a large proportion of our people who have not been Christianized. Surely some blame must come back upon all our Churches, and there are lessons which all need to learn. It is necessary for all of us alike to study every sign of the times; to be prepared for and to welcome light from whatever quarter it may come; to develope our separate systems so as to make them available for every kind of service; to adopt every adjustment of machinery, every variation of plan, every wise innovation which a holy ingenuity can by any possibility suggest, so as to make all our Churches mighty, not for conflict with each other, but for the struggle against unbelief and sin. Congregationalism would be untrue to its traditions and principles if it did not show itself possessed of this catholic spirit, and at the same time inspired with a consuming zeal to make its power felt to the utmost for the glory of Christ and the extension of His gospel. Its motto will ever be, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth." Yet, while thus cultivating relations of friendship and charity with kindred Churches, its aims will be so to develope its own resources that in the final issue it shall be abundantly manifest that it has "not run in vain, neither laboured in vain," and that the great principles with which it has been put in trust have not suffered through want of fidelity and zeal on the part of those who have been called to such noble service.

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